MUNNU

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Dedication

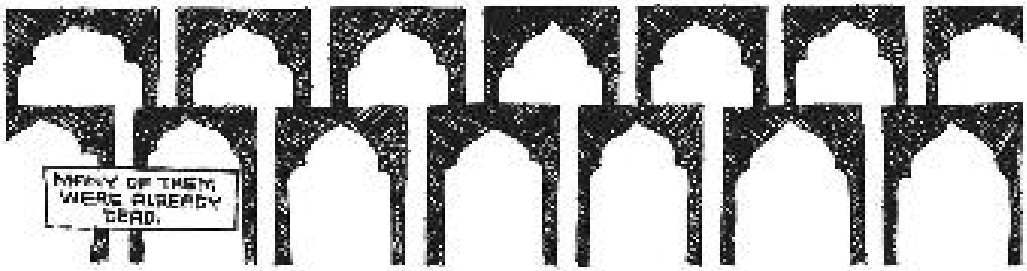
For Abba, who made Fridays special.

FAMILY PHOTO

1903
THIS IS MUNNA'S ELDEST BROTHER, BILAL.
HERE IS SHAHNAZ, HIS SISTER.
AND THAT IS SAFAD. HIS FAMILY CALLED HIM MUNNA, 'THE YOUNGEST'.
SRINAGAR
ETDGAH
CITY CENTRE, LAL CHOWK
BAUMARGEN
THAT IS BATAMALOO, WHERE MUNNA'S FAMILY LIVES.
CHINA
PAK-ISTAN
KASHMIR
• SRINAGAR
INDIA

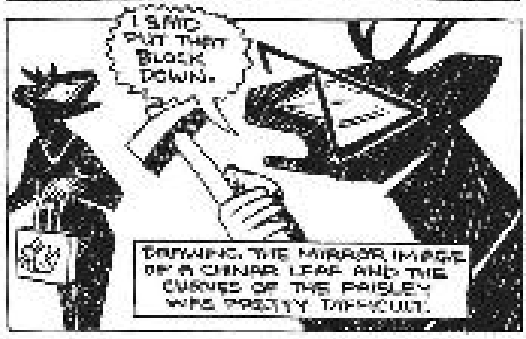
EVERY WEEK BILAL TOOK THEM TO MONROSE STUDIO FOR A PHOTO TOGETHER.
THERE WOULD HAVE BEEN MORE PICTURES, BUT MAMMA INSISTED THEY CELEBRATE ED MORRISON.
BILAL, WHAT IF THE MOTHER OF A MARTYR SEES ALL YOU BROTHERS WALKING TOGETHER, LIKE A CRICKET TEAM? YOU WANT TO RUB SALT ON HER WOUNDS?
BILAL, TAKE YOUR BROTHERS BACK INSIDE OR I WILL RUB CHILLI ON YOUR ASS.
THEIR DADDY, SALMAN.
THAT IS THEIR MOTHER, RASEENA. THEY CALLED HER MAMMA.
AND IF I SEE YOU WRITING CHEAT SHEETS FOR THE EXAMS NEXT YEAR, I WILL OPEN A VEGETABLE SHOP FOR YOU.
ED BECAME LIKE ANY OTHER DAY – THEY STUDIED IN BILAL'S ROOM.

HOWEVER, ONCE ON THEIR OWN, THEY SPLIT THEMSELVES INTO TWO GROUPS - ROYL AND AKHTAR, VS. BILAL AND MUNNU — TO PLAY INDOOR CRICKET WITH AN ENGLISH TO URDU DICTIONARY.
THEY WOULD OPEN A RANDOM PAGE OF THE DICTIONARY. THE DIGIT AT THE END OF THE PAGE NUMBER WOULD BE THE RUNS SCORED. SOMETIMES IT ENDED WITH 1.
SOMETIMES 2 OR 4.
SOMETIMES 6 OR EVEN 8.
HOWEVER, A 0 MARKED THE END OF THE INNINGS AND THE OTHER TEAM WOULD TAKE THE DICTIONARY TO CHASE THE TOTAL SCORE.
WHEN YOU'RE DONE WITH YOUR STUDIES, WOULD YOU PLEASE HELP ME BRING THE WOOD DRAWINGS? AND WHAT'S ALL THE SHOUTING ABOUT?
PAPA WAS MOSTLY KIND BUT HE WAS SOMETIMES TOUGH ON BILAL SO THAT HE WOULDN'T FOLLOW IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF SOME OF HIS CLASSMATES.
MOST OF THEM WAD CROSSED THE BORDER TO RECEIVE ARMED TRAINING IN PAKISTANI PORTION OF KASHMIR AND ARE COME BACK TO FIGHT AGAINST INDIAN OCCUPATION IN THIS, THE INDIAN PORTION OF KASHMIR.


MANY OF THEM WERE ALREADY DEAD.

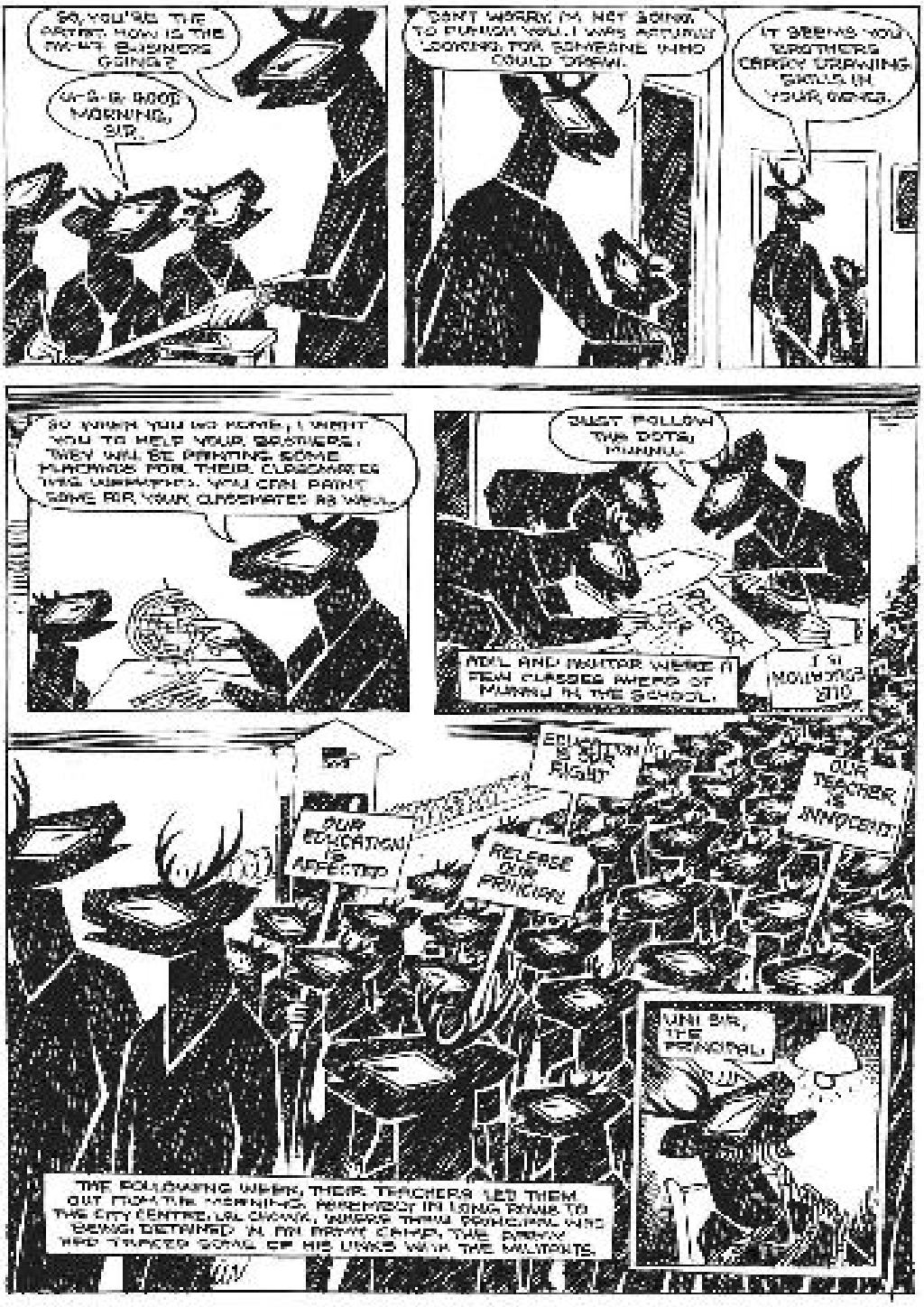
PAPA WAS AN ARTISAN. HE CARVED EMBROIDERY DESIGNS ON WALNUT WOOD BLOCKS. EVERYONE ENJOYED YELPING PAPA!
MUMMY, YOU CAN PLAY.

THOSE BLOCKS ARE VERY EXPENSIVE. GO ASK MAMMA FOR AN OLD NEWSPAPER AND DRAW ON THAT.
BUT DRAWING ON THE WOODEN BLOCKS WAS FUN ENOUGH.

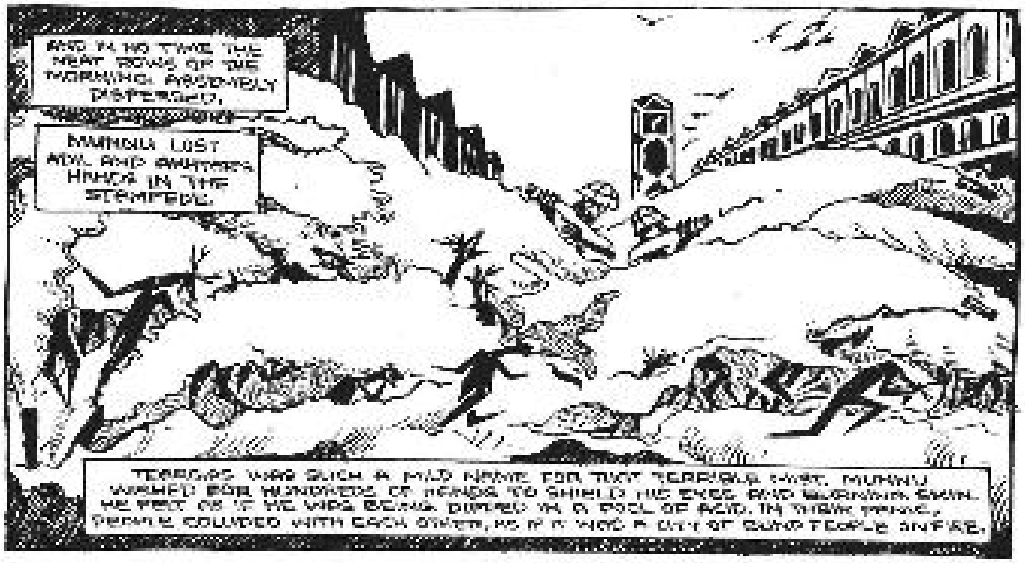

I SAID PUT THAT BLOCK DOWN.
DRAWING THE MIRROR IMAGE OF A CHINAR LEAF AND THE CURVES OF THE PAISLEY WAS PRETTY DIFFICULT.

AND SKETCHING THE PHOTOS OF UNRECOGNISABLE, DISFIGURED PEOPLE FROM THE NEWSPAPERS WAS EVEN HARDER - EVEN IF YOU TRACED THEM.

DRAWING AN AK-47 WAS EASY, THOUGH.
A FEW STRAIGHT LINES AND A FEW SIMPLE CURVES.
HEY, WOULD YOU DRAW ONE ON MY BOOK, AS WELL?
SORRY. I HAVE TO FINISH MY HOME WORK.
HOW COULD YOU DO YOUR HOME WORK AND YOU DRAW AN AK-47 FOR US?
NOT A BAD IDEA!
THANKS, SAYED!
HEY! YOU DREW AN AK-47 FOR ALL YOUR FRIENDS EXCEPT ME!
MUNNU CARVED A STAMP OF AK-47 FROM AN ERASER...
...AND MET THE BROWNIES DEMAND FOR AK-47S IN THE SCHOOL...


SO, YOU'RE THE ARTIST. HOW IS THE TW-ET BUSINESS GOING?
W-A-R GOOD MORNING, SIR.
DON'T WORRY, I'M NOT GOING TO PUNISH YOU. I WAS ACTUALLY LOOKING FOR SOMEONE WHO COULD DRAW.
IT SEEMS YOUR BROTHERS CARRY DRAWING SKILLS IN YOUR GENES.
SO WHEN YOU GO HOME, I WANT YOU TO HELP YOUR BROTHERS. THEY WILL BE PAINTING SOME PLACARDS FOR THEIR CLASSMATES THIS WEEKEND. YOU CAN PAINT SOME FOR YOUR CLASSMATES AS WELL.
JUST FOLLOW THE DOTS, MUNNU.
ADIL AND AKHTAR WERE A FEW CLASSES AHEAD OF MUNNU IN THE SCHOOL.
OUR EDUCATION IS AFFECTED
RELEASE OUR PRINCIPAL
OUR TEACHER IS INNOCENT!
UNI SIR, THE PRINCIPAL!
THE FOLLOWING WEEK, THEIR TEACHERS LED THEM OUT FROM THE MORNING ASSEMBLY IN LONG MARCH TO THE CITY CENTRE, LAL CHOWK, WHERE THEIR PRINCIPAL WAS BEING DETAINED IN AN ARMY CAMP. THE ARMY HAD TRACED SOME OF HIS LINKS WITH THE MILITANTS.

THE CITY CENTRE WAS EVER FULL OF PEOPLE AND HUSTLE-BUSTLE.
WE WANT FREEDOM!
YOU SON OF A BITCH! WHEN AN ARMY BULLET BREAKS YOUR EMPTY HEAD, THEN YOU'LL GET YOUR FREEDOM!
TEACHERS HAD INSTRUCTED INDIA TO AVOID FREEDOM SLOGANS.
WE WANT FREEDOM!
FUCK OFF BACK TO INDIA!
HOWEVER, THE PEOPLE BY WHO JOINED THE PROCESSION WERE NOT AWARE OF THIS INSTRUCTION.


AND IN NO TIME THE NEAT ROWS OF THE MORNING ASSEMBLY DISPERSED.
MUNNU LOST HIM AND ANTHER HANG IN THE STAMPEDE.
TERROR WAS SUCH A MILD NAME FOR THAT TERRIBLE NIGHT. MUNNU WAITED FOR HUNDREDS OF HANDS TO SHIELD HIS EYES AND BURNING SKIN. HE FELT AS IF HE WAS BEING DIPPED IN A POOL OF ACID. IN THEIR PANIC, PEOPLE COLLIDED WITH EACH OTHER, AS IF IT WAS A DAY OF SLAND TEACHER AN FAE.

FORTUNATELY, SOMEONE PULLED MUNNU AND A FEW OTHER KIDS OUT OF THE STAMPEDE.
THEY STAYED WITH HIM UNTIL THE CLOUDS OF TRAILERS FADED AWAY.
YOU SURE YOU KNOW THE WAY HOME?
WE SOLD CHEESE IN THE CITY CENTRE AND UNLOADED THEM OFF AT THEIR SCHOOL THAT EVENING.
WHEN YOUR SCHOOL REOPENS TOMORROW, I'LL TEACH YOUR TEACHERS A LESSON!
WE LOOKED FOR YOU EVERYWHERE.
APIL AND AKATAK WERE HOME ALREADY.
IN THE END, THE SCHOOL REOPENED A FEW DAYS LATER.
DEAR STUDENTS, WE ARE SORRY TO INFORM YOU THAT THE ARMY IS RELUCTANT TO RELEASE OUR PRINCIPAL. BUT WE WON'T LET THAT AFFECT YOUR STUDIES! WE HAVE ARRANGED A NEW SCHOOL FOR YOU IN WABENSH, A FEW MILES AWAY FROM HERE.
OUR SCHOOL BUSES WILL TAKE YOU THERE. STUDENTS ABOVE THE FIFTH GRADE MUST JOIN RIVERSIDE SCHOOL IMMEDIATELY. JUNIORS CAN STAY HOME UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE, AND MUST DEVOTE THEMSELVES TO THE HOMEWORK THEY WILL BE GIVEN TODAY.

MUNNU WAS IN FIRST GRADE, SO HE DIDN'T HAVE TO GO TO THE SCHOOL. NOW, AND AGAIN, HIS PAPA WOULD GO WORK.
MAMMA, MAKE SOME SWEET TEA. SCHOOL IS FINISHED!

SO WHAT IF YOUR SCHOOL IS CLOSED? YOU'VE GOT HOMEWORK TO FINISH INSTEAD OF MESSING UP THESE BLOCKS.
BUT MAMMA, ALL I WANT IS TO HELP PAPA AND LEARN CARPENTRY.
MUNNU, BUSINESS IS BAD. I MIGHT HAVE TO TAKE UP CARPENTRY AND FIX ROOFS AND DOORS.

YOU WILL STUDY HARD AND BECOME A DOCTOR. DOCTORS NEVER STRUGGLE FOR BUSINESS AND THEY ARE WELL RESPECTED.
PAPA, I WANT TO BECOME AN ARTIST. ARTISTS MAKE MORE MONEY AND THEY ARE MORE FAMOUS AS WELL.
THAT'S TRUE, BUT YOU LIVE IN KASHMIR, AND TOURISTS DON'T COME HERE NOW. WHO WILL BUY YOUR ART? THE ARMY?
HERE, CHECK THIS OUT. WHAT DO YOU THINK?
NOT BAD!

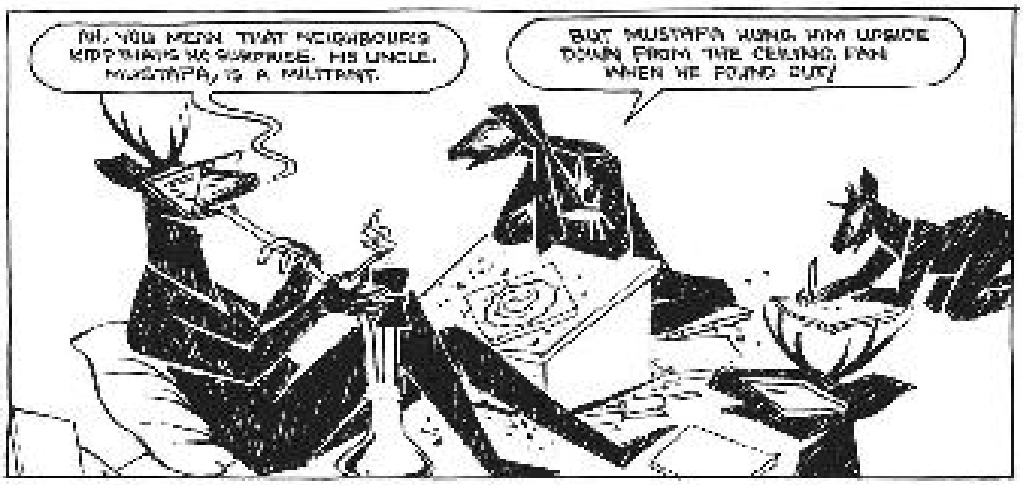
IF YOU LET ME DRAW, I CAN WINGS YOUR BUCKS WHILE YOU'RE TAKEN FOR THE CRACK-DOWN IDENTIFICATION PARADE.
ALRIGHT, I'LL GIVE YOU SOME TRICKS BUT PROMISE ME THAT YOU'LL COME FIRST IN YOUR CLASS, LIKE PAUL FAG AMATOR.
OF COURSE.
YOU SEE THIS EMPTY SPACE BETWEEN THE CHINAR BRANCHES? YOU HAVE TO FILL THEM WITH RAISERGRAM...
DRAW FISH SCALES FIRST AND THEN FILL EACH SCALE WITH LINES LIKE THE RAYS OF THE SUN.
BUT THAT'S EASY
NO, IT ISN'T. YOU CAN DRAW ON MY GRAFT SKETCHES FIRST. IF YOU DO A GOOD JOB, YOU'LL GET A WOOD BLOCK.
HUHNU, YOU HAVEN'T EATEN ANYTHING TODAY. TAKE A BREAK.
YOU LIKE MY DRAWING?
PAPA DREW A FEW QUICK STROKES, AND WITH EACH STROKE A CHINAR OR PARLEY LEAF CAME INTO BEING. BUT HUHNU'S LINES WERE SHORT AND BROKEN LIKE A NOW OF FRIES SQUASHED ON THE HEATER.

PAPA, LOOK... I DESERVE A WOODBLOCK NOW.
HMM. YOU'LL NEED TO PRACTISE FOR A FEW MORE MONTHS FIRST.
PAPA WAS HARD TO CONVINCE.
BUT THE USUAL CRACK DOWN WILL BE IMPOSED SOON.
CRACKDOWN! CRACKDOWN!
AND THE ARMY WILL RAID AND SEARCH EVERY HOUSE.
THEY WILL TAKE BALL, PAPA AND EVERY MAN OR TALL BOY FROM THE NEIGHBOURHOOD TO THE IDENTIFICATION PARADE.
THERE, A FEW HUNDRED MEN WILL BE THOROUGHLY FRISKED.
THE INFORMER SITTING IN THE JEEP WILL STUDY THE FACES OF EVERY MAN AND HONK WHEN HE IDENTIFIES A MILITANT, OR SOMEONE WHO LOOKS TO THE MILITANTS. THE ARMY WILL ARREST THE MILITANT.
THEN THE REST WILL BE ALLOWED TO GO HOME.
THE CRACK-DOWN WILL BE LIFTED.
THE ENTIRE PROCESS WILL LAST FROM DAWN TO DUSK. I'LL HAVE PLENTY OF TIME TO DRAW SOME WOODBLOCKS WITHOUT PAPA'S INTERRUPTIONS.
SUGAR

BUT MOST OF THE TIME THE ARMY FORGOT TO RAID THEIR HOUSE AND TAKE PAPA.

MUMMY, DON'T HOLD THE PAPER SO CLOSE TO YOUR EYES. YOU DON'T WANT TO WEAR BOTTLE WINDOWS WHEN YOU GROW UP, DO YOU?
WHEN I WAS THEIR AGE, I'D PLAY FOOTBALL ALL DAY LONG, EAT MANY EGGS AND GO TO THE CINEMA. THEY HAVEN'T EVEN SEEN A MOVIE IN THE CINEMA

DON'T TEMPT MY CHILDREN. AT LEAST THEY'RE SAFE. THINK ABOUT THE ONES WHO ARE BEING USED AS HUMAN SHIELDS IN GUN BATTLES.
YOU SHOULD BE THANKFUL - AT LEAST OUR CHILDREN DON'T MINGLE WITH THE MILITANTS. SHAKATUK FOUND BULLET CARTRIDGES IN HER SON'S BAG.


OH, YOU MEAN THAT NEIGHBOURS KEEPTHANG AS SURPRISE. HIS UNCLE, MUSTAPA, IS A MILITANT.
BUT MUSTAPA HUNG HIM UPSIDE DOWN FROM THE CEILING FAN WHEN HE FOUND OUT!

AND MUSTAFA ALWAYS ENCOURAGED MY CHILDREN TO STUDY HARD.

I KNOW! HE LOOKED AT HIS NAME DRAWING FAMILIARLY AND URGED ME TO GET HIM ENROLLED IN CHARGAM SO THAT HE COULD LEARN CALLIGRAPHY.

MUSTAFA WAS TALL WITH BIG, POINTY CHEEKBONES.

A COUPLE OF YEARS BEFORE, THE ARMY HAD IMPOSED AN UNDECLARED CURFEW IN THE AREA AND MUSTAFA FOUND HIMSELF TRAPPED IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD.

HIS RELATIVES LIVED NEARBY BUT THE ARMY WAS ALREADY THERE.

SO HE HAD SOUGHT REFUGE IN HANNA'S HOUSE. SINCE THEN, WHENEVER HE VISITED HIS RELATIVES HE PAID A VISIT TO HANNA. THEY HAD BECOME FRIENDS.

MAMMA, MUSTAFA TOLD ME THAT ARTISTS HAVE TO STUDY HARD, TOO, AND IF I GET A DISTINCTION IN MY EXAMS THIS YEAR, HE'LL GIVE ME 5 RUPEES ON EID.
I'LL CUT YOUR HANDS OFF IF YOU TAKE MONEY FROM ANYONE OTHER THAN YOUR PARENTS!
MUSTAFA IS RIGHT; MUNNU SHOULD GO TO CHARCOAL WITH SHAHNAZ WHILE HIS SCHOOL IS CLOSED.
YOU'LL SEE - LITTLE MUNNU WILL BECOME A BIG DOCTOR AND MAKE US PROUD.
AGHHH!

CHOCOLATES,
TOFFEES, ALMONDS
AND CASHEWS

CRADLING HIS QURAN EXERCISE BOOK WHILE WEARING HIS EMBROIDERED CAP MADE MUNNU FEEL LIKE THE PICTURE OF THE RINGEL-FACED KID READING THE QURAN WITH HIS SISTER THAT WAS POPULAR ON LUNAR CALENDARS AT THE TIME.
PEACE BE UPON HIM.
AND HIS FAMILY AND FRIENDS.
ON THE WAY TO DARGGAH, SHAHNAZ AND MUNNU WOULD RECITE PRAYERS WHILE COLLECTING FALLEN RIPE MULBERRIES ON THE SMOKED MOUND WHERE A DESCENDANT OF PROPHET MUHAMMAD WAS BURIED UNDERNEATH THE MULBERRY TREE.
MOLVI SAHIB, HERE IS MY YOUNGER BROTHER. I TOLD YOU ABOUT.
MMM. DOESN'T HE HAVE A TONGUE IN HIS MOUTH?
DARGGAH BUILT OF ROPES, STRAW MATS AND OLD PAPER.
TAKE YOUR PLACE RIGHT THERE. NEXT TIME YOU ENTER DARGGAH, I WANT TO HEAR A SALAAM FROM YOU!
MOLVI SAHIB HAD NO BEARD AND WAS VERY SKINNY.

GIRLS WOULD SIT IN SEPARATE GROUPS, OPPOSITE THE ROW OF BOYS. THEY WORE COLOURFUL SCARVES. ALL OF THEM WERE BEAUTIFUL.
FOR THE FIRST FEW DAYS, BEING THERE FELT PLEASANT.
BUT SOON HEARING THEM, SOFT VOICES MURMURING, PRAYING BECAME ROUTINE.
WAKE UP! THIS ISN'T YOUR HOUSE!
MUNNU HAD TO LEARN THE ARABIC ALPHABET BEFORE HE COULD READ THE QURAN. DARASGAH HAD JUST REPLACED HIS SCHOOL.
SHAHNAZ, IF I CAN LEARN THE QURAN FROM YOU, THEN WHAT'S THE POINT OF DARASGAH?
MAMMA, I CAN LEARN THE QURAN FROM SHAHNAZ. THERE'S NO NEED TO GO TO DARASGAH.
AND I CAN COPY CALLIGRAPHY FROM URDU NEWSPAPERS. I'LL STUDY HARD. NO WAY! ARE YOU LISTENING?

I WON'T EAT SUGAR OR BOTHER YOU AT ALL!
AND MAMMA THOUGHT MUNNU WAS BECOMING OBEDIENT.
DINNERTIME BECAME AN OBLIGATION.
THOSE WHO BUNKED OFF TAHASSAH WERE HUNG BY THEIR HAIR UNTIL IT TORE OUT OF THEIR SCALP.
MOLVI SAHIB LATER COLLECTED THE HAIR IN AN EMPTY APPLE CRATE.
THOSE WHO RESISTED WERE FLOGGED.
WHY ARE YOU SO RESTLESS?
I NEED TO PEE!
MUNNU CRAWLED HIMSELF INTO A CORNER AND KEPT QUIET TO AVOID BEING NOTICED BY MOLVI SAHIB.
MOLVI SAHIB, CAN I GO TO PERFORM ABLUTION?
WHEEEEEEE...
UNFORTUNATELY, THE TAP IN THE BATHROOM WAS OUT OF MUNNU'S REACH.
FLOGGING WAS ALSO THE PUNISHMENT FOR NOT WASHING YOUR HANDS AFTER PEEING.

ABRAHAM-IN-KAMAN, MAY I COME IN, MOLVI SAHIB?
SO FAR MUNNA HAS BEEN AN OBEDIENT DISCIPLE, AND CONTINUED SEEING SO FOR A FEW MORE WEEKS.
UNTIL ONE SUNED DARAS-SAH
ABRAHAM-IN-KAMAN.
WHILE-I-YOUR-ABRAHAM.
IT WAS LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT
LIKE A QUEEN SHE SEEMED TO BE WALKING ON AIR.
SAIMA'S BEAUTY MOCKED THE BIG BANG THEORY AND PROVED THE EXISTENCE OF GOD AND HIS CRAFT!
AS IF STRUCK BY A LIGHTNING BOLT, MUNNA FROZE IN HER PRESENCE.
AND CHEWED HIS NAILS, WONDERING WHAT SHE ATE THAT GAVE HER SUCH GRACE.

RUMOUR HAD IT THAT FOR THE CRIME OF LOVE, FLOGGING WAS JUST A STARTER. MOLVI SAHIB WOULD MAKE YOU STARE AT THE PATTERNS OF THE WINDOW-PANES WHICH FLICKERED AND DISTORTED THE OUTSIDE VIEW LIKE A GRAND KALEIDOSCOPE. IN A FEW MINUTES, YOU WERE DIZZY, NAUSEOUS OR EVEN UNCONSCIOUS.
DESPITE THIS, MUNNU TRIED TO CATCH GLIMPSES OF SAMMA.
BEAUTIFUL. SHE WAS BEAUTIFUL.
WITHOUT HER, DAMYASHIM FELT LIKE AN EMPTY ROOM FULL OF INSIGNIFICANT CREATURES.
THAT IS INITIAL, MOLVI SAHIB'S RESISTANCE.
EVERY TIME MOLVI SAHIB'S STICK BROKE ON SOMEONE'S HEAD, BUM OR ARM, INTIZAR WOULD HAND HIM A NEW ONE, OILED AND TINTED BLACK WITH FIRE.
HE ARRANGED THE BENCHES IN DARBAGAM AND WHILE DOING SO, HE EXCHANGED PLEASANTRIES WITH THE GIRLS.
HE WAS A SKINNY, WOLVI, GOD-FEARING PLAYBOY. BUT GIRLS GREETED HIM WITH A BIG SMILE.

HE WOULD INTRODUCE HIMSELF TO EVERY NEW GIRL WITH ONE EXCUSE OR ANOTHER. HE NEVER RAN OUT OF EXCUSES—HE HAD NINE BROTHERS AND SEVERAL SISTERS.

MUNNU THOUGHT OF MR. MOSENKATAR.
COPYING FROM LETTER FROM THE LOCAL NEWSPAPER, HE WROTE OUT ONE OF MUNNU'S POEMS FOR HER.
BUT SHE WAS MESMERIZING, AND HE WAS DUMBSTRUCK WITH NERVOUSNESS. HE COULDN'T PRESENT IT TO HER.
THE TIME OF THE POEM BLOTTED IN MASSIVE SWEATY HANDS.
THE IDEA OF NEVER BEING NOTICED BY SHIMA BROKE MUNNU'S HEART.
HE TRIED AGAIN, BUT THIS TIME HE WROTE SEVERAL MOSTLY POEMS OUT IN A FRESH HANDWRITING, WITH A NOTE PRAISING HER BEAUTY.
BUT ONCE AGAIN, MUNNU FROZE WITH FEAR OF GETTING CAUGHT.
WHILE SHE LOOKED AWAY, HE MANAGED TO PLACE THE SLIPPY ON HER BENCH, BUT SHE IGNORED IT. PERHAPS SHIMA THOUGHT IT BELONGED TO SOMEONE ELSE.

HOWEVER, THE DIARY DID
NOT WORK. HE READ IT
AND PLACED IT IN HIS BAG.

NEXT DAY...
MUNNU WAS HUNG BY HIS
HAIR. THE DRESSED HAD
GIVEN THE DIARY TO
MOLVI SAHIB.

PAPA WAS CALLED
TO DARBAR
AS WELL.

THEYWAZ CARRIED MUNNU LIKE A BACKPACK, AND MOLVI
SAHIB FLOGGED HIM AS IF BEATING DUST FROM AN OLD CARPET
NOW SING
ME THOSE
POEMS,
YOU BRAT!
FAAAaaaa
SAIMA WITNESSED ALL THIS. THE
LACK OF SYMPATHY ON HER FACE
HURTED MUNNU'S SOUL.

YOU FILTHY FOX! I
KNEW YOU WOULD
CHOOSE BAPU OVER
HONEY ONE DAY.
HE WEPT MUNNU REPEATEDLY UNTIL
THEY GOT HOME. PAPA BARRED
MUNNU FROM GOING TO DARBAR.

MUNNU! I FLOATED UNCONSCIOUS-NESS TO AVOID FURTHER HUMILIATION AND PAIN
MUNNU! WAKE UP! WE'RE GOING TO THE PHARMACY.
BUT SOON HE WAS GENUINELY BURDENED WITH FEVER, PAIN AND A WAVY, PURPLE RUM
I'M NOT HAVING THAT INJECTION!
MUNNU, EVERYONE IS WATCHING US. STOP, PLEASE! I'M EXHAUSTED! I'LL GIVE YOU ONE HUGE AND A TOFFEE.
MAMMA! IT REALLY HURTS! PLEASE!
ALRIGHT. YOU'LL HAVE IT, BUT ONLY FROM DR. MAGBOOL.
I'LL SEE.
EXCUSE ME, WRONG TIME. DOES DR. MAGBOOL GET HERE?
WHEN HE'S FINISHED AT THE POLICE CONTROL ROOM, YOU MIGHT HAVE TO WAIT.

DR. MAGBOOL ALSO WORKED IN THE POLICE CONTROL ROOM IN BATHMALOO, WHERE HE DID AUTOPSIES ON PEOPLE KILLED IN CROSSFIRE, CUSTODIAL KILLINGS AND MINE BLASTS.
YOU'LL BE FINE. NOW DO THE YOU, LITTLE MUNNU?
HE'S FORB.
HAD MUNNU KNOWN WHAT AUTOPSY MEANT, HE WOULD HAVE PREFERRED A BUTCHER TO GIVE HIM THE INJECTION.
MAGBOOL KNEW MUNNU VERY WELL. HE HAD CARRIED OUT MUNNU'S CIRCUMCISION.
IT'S DONE!
MUNNU DIDN'T FEEL A THING. MAGBOOL UNDERSTOOD HUMAN FLESH.

HOW ARE YOU FEELING TODAY, MY LITTLE MAN? YOU WANT TO TAKE ON MY BLOCKS? I NEED SOME HELP.
PAPA BRAKE TIED KICKING MUNNU.
AS SOON AS MUNNU'S GUM HAD HEALED, PAPA TOOK HIM TO THE OLD CITY ON HIS BICYCLE, WHERE HE SOLD THE CARVED BLOCKS TO THE FURNITURE MANUFACTURERS.
PAPA, DID YOU MAKE THAT WINDOW AS WELL?
NO, MUNNU, THOSE WINDOWS WERE THERE EVEN BEFORE MY GRANDFATHER WAS BORN.
IT WAS A GRAND CITY OUT THERE.
THE OLD CITY LOOKED LIKE AN EXTENSION OF THE CHINAR BRANCHES. EACH HOUSE HAD DOORS AND WINDOWS DECORATED WITH PAISLEY AND CHINAR WOODCARVING.

PAPA, MY BUM HURTS.
WE'RE ALMOST HOME
NO LUCK, WABBENA. MOST SHOPS WERE CLOSED DUE TO THE RESTRICTIONS. BUT I'LL GIVE IT ONE MORE TRY TOMORROW.
NOBODY WAS INTERESTED IN PAPA'S WOODCARVINGS AND HE COULD NO LONGER AFFORD TO BUY FRESH BLOCKS. ALL THE CARVED BLOCKS WERE NOW PILED IN PAPA'S WORKROOM.
MUMMY, HOW ABOUT ANOTHER TRIP TO THE OLD CITY?
YAY!
GUCYA, WHY CAN'T YOU GO ALONE? MUMMY IS TOO YOUNG TO RUN IF THE SHOOTING STARTS!
HE DOESN'T NEED TO RUN. THE OLD CITY IS MY SECOND HOME!
MUMMY, SEE THAT HOUSE? I USED TO PLAY THERE WHEN I WAS A CHILD. IF THEY SEE US, THEY'LL FORCE US TO HAVE DINNER WITH THEM.
PAPA WOULD TURN INTO A BOY OF MUMMY'S AGE DURING THOSE BICYCLE RIDES.

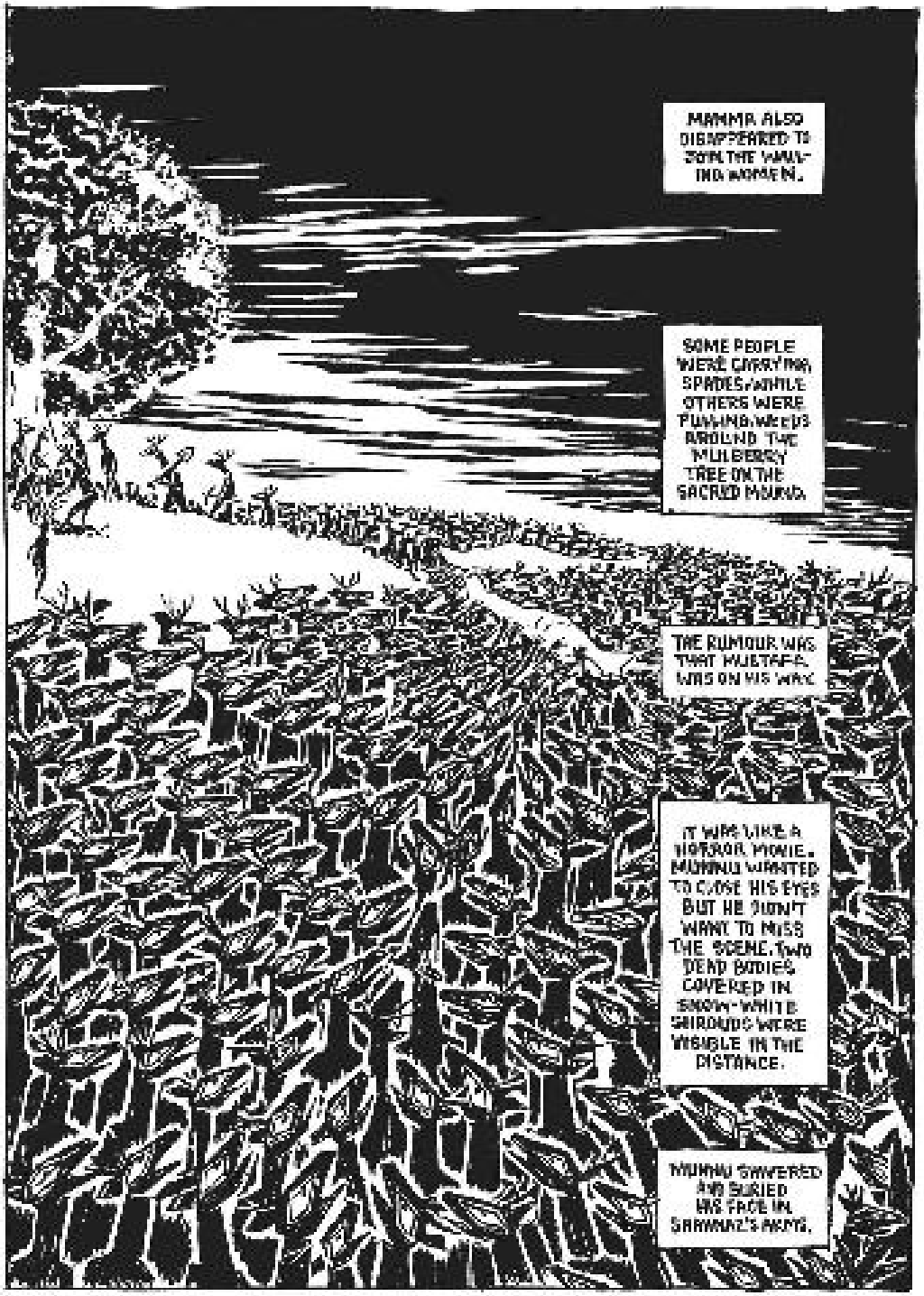
SEE THOSE GREEN ROOFS? ONE OF MY MOMER'S CHILDHOOD FRIENDS LIVES THERE. I PEEP MANY TIMES IN HER LIFE WHEN I WAS LITTLE.
I USED TO SWIM OVER THERE.
PAPA, I'M HUNGRY. CAN WE HAVE SOME ICE CREAM?
OF COURSE, MAMMA, BUT LET'S GET RID OF THESE HOWLY BLOCKS FIRST.
THEY HAD NO LUCK.
KASHMIR ART AND CRAFTS
GUYS, WHO WANTS FURNITURE IN HELL?
ANGREE* RARELY VISIT THIS BURNT-OUT VALLEY NOW, AND PEOPLE ONLY WANT FAKE AND CHEAP ARTEFACTS. WHY DON'T YOU ENGRAVE THE SAME DESIGNS ON COPPER UTENSILS?
*WESTERN TOURISTS.

THINK ABOUT IT. I CAN SUPPLY YOU WITH SOME COPPER ITEMS AND TOOLS TO START WITH. ENGRAVED COPPER CUPS, BOWLS AND JUGS SELL LIKE HOTCAKES DURING WEDDING SEASON.
A FAMILY MAN IN THIS SITUATION DOESN'T HAVE THE LUXURY OF MAKING CHOICES THESE DAYS!
BACK HOME, MAMMA STORED ALL THE CARVED WOODEN BLOCKS, STENCILS AND CHISELS IN THE ATTIC. PAPA REPLACED THE WOODCARVING VISE WITH A CEDAR TREE STUMP.
PAPA'S NEW PROFESSION WAS MESSY. BEFORE ENGRAVING THE COPPER ITEMS, HE HAD TO MELT SOME TIN-LIKE STUFF AND MIX IT WITH TERRACOTTA POWDER.
THE THICK BROWN MIXTURE, CALLED KREEL, WAS THEN POURED INTO THE COPPER ITEMS.
ONCE COLD, IT TURNED SOLID AND PROTECTED THE COPPER FROM DENT & DURING ENGRAVING.

THE NEW CHISELS WERE TINY AND PAPA HAD TO HIT THEM WITH AN IRON HAMMER TO MARK THE ENGRAVING. UNLIKE WOODCUTTING, PAPA COULD NOT PUSH THE CHISELS WITH HIS CHIN TO MARK THE ENGRAVINGS DURING A CRACKDOWN.
TIK TIK TIK
THUK THUK THUK
THE COPPER WAS GONE, SO PAPA MADE A WOODEN HAMMER TO MUFFLE THE NOISE.
BUT NEIGHBOURS MANAGED TO HELP.
THUK THUK THUK
GOOD MORNING, SIR. I THINK YOU FORGOT TO CHECK THE HOUSE BEHIND THE BUSHES.
THE ARMY KICKED OPEN THE MAIN GATE...
...DRAGGED DADA AND PAPA OUT FOR THE CRACKDOWN PARADE...
... AND SEARCHED THEIR HOUSE AS IF LOOKING FOR A TICKING TIME BOMB.

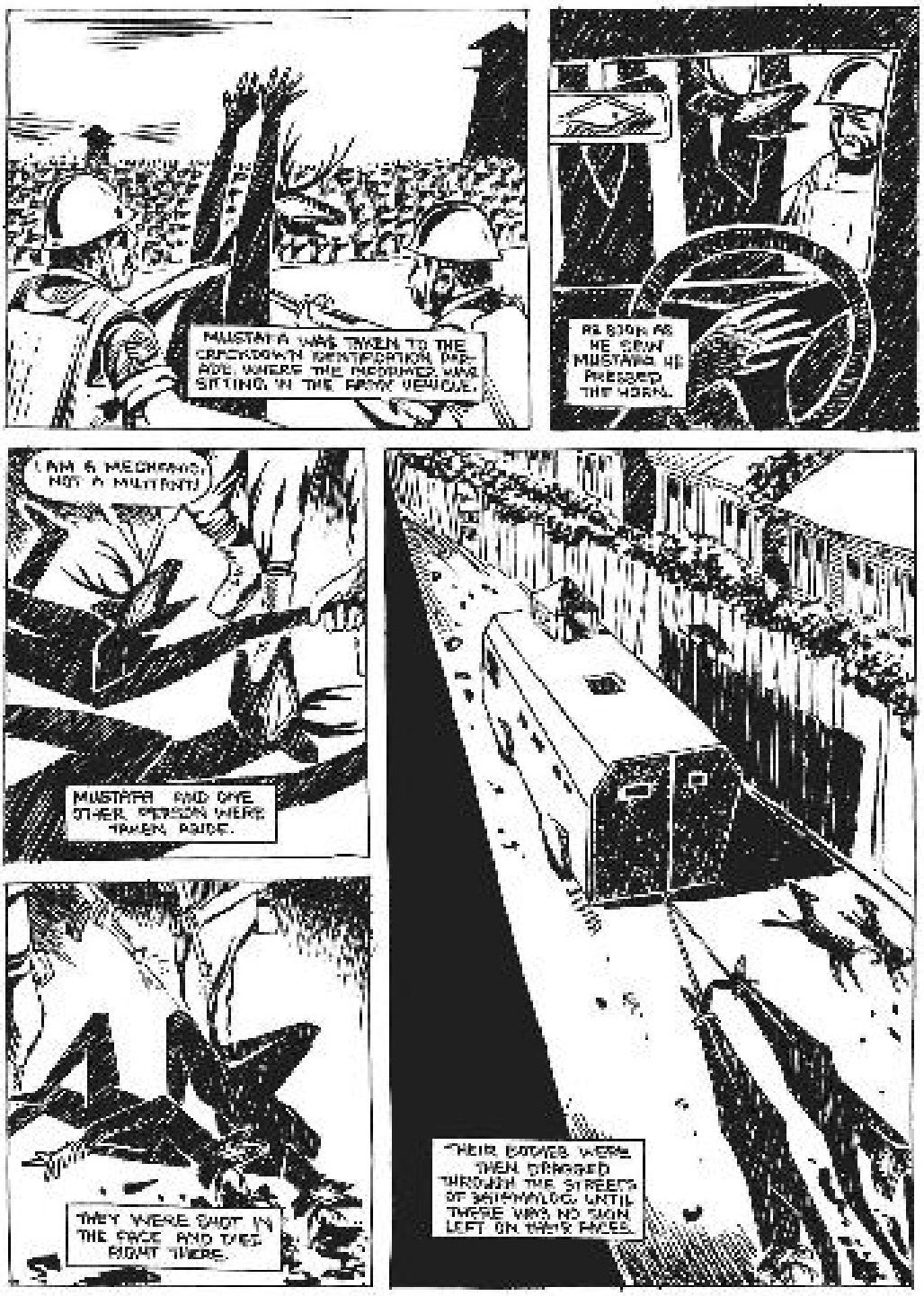
IS THAT A WATER MELON YOU'RE HIDING IN YOUR BELLY?
THEY ARE MY CHILDREN!
CRACKDOWN DAYS WERE LONG. MAMMA'S FACE WOULD SWELL FROM BLOOD PRESSURE. SHE PRAYED FOR CALM AND TOOK SEVERAL TIMES A DAY.
SHAWNEE TOOK CARE OF THE KITCHEN.
ADIL POURED MILK BACK INTO THE BARREL.
ANWAR WOULD TRY TO FIX THE BROKEN HINGES OF THE MAIN GATE.
AND MUNNU TRACED THE PICTURES FROM THE NEWSPAPERS.
IN THE EVENING, AFTER THE CRACKDOWN WAS LIFTED, EVERYONE WAITED IN THE STREET FOR THEIR RELATIVES TO COME BACK FROM THE PARADE.

THAT DAY, MORE PEOPLE THAN USUAL POURED INTO THE STREETS.
WHEN SILPL AND PAPA RETURNED, YOGURT-LIKE STUFF HAD ACCUMULATED AT THE CORNER OF THEIR LIPS.
THEIR FACES WERE WORN AND PALE.
YOU WANT SOME MILK?
JUST BRING THE HANKAIL.
THEY KILLED MUSTAFA!
WHAT!
AS IF PAPA HAD BROKEN THE NEWS TO THE UNIVERSE, THE SKY TURNED RED AND WOMEN, MEN AND CHILDREN STARTED MOURNING.
PAPA, SILPL, ROL AND AKHTAR RUSHED BACK INTO THE STREET AND MERGED WITH THE RIVER OF PEOPLE.


MAMMA ALSO DISAPPEARED TO JOIN THE WAILING WOMEN.
SOME PEOPLE WERE CARRYING SPADES, WHILE OTHERS WERE PULLING WEEDS AROUND THE MULBERRY TREE ON THE SACRED MOUND.
THE RUMOUR WAS THAT MUSTAFA WAS ON HIS WAY.
IT WAS LIKE A HORROR MOVIE. MUNNU WANTED TO CLOSE HIS EYES BUT HE DIDN'T WANT TO MISS THE SCENE. TWO DEAD BODIES COVERED IN SNOW-WHITE SHROUDS WERE VISIBLE IN THE DISTANCE.
MUNNU SHIVERED AND BURIED HIS FACE IN SHAHNAZ'S ARMS.

THEY LAID THE DEAD BODIES ON THE GROUND FOR THE FUNERAL PRAYERS..
THAT IS MY SON! LET ME SEE HIM!
THEY DIDN'T LET THE MOTHER UNSHROUD HER SONS FACE..
OH GOD, HOW MERCIFUL YOU ARE. THIS IS NOT MY SON! THIS IS NOT MY SON. MY SON HAS VERY SMALL THUMBNAILS. MY SON IS ALIVE!
.. BUT THEY DID LET HER DELICATE HER SON'S HANDS WITH HENNA.
IT WAS THE OTHER CORPSE THAT WAS HER SON.
AS THE FUNERAL PRAYERS WERE OFFERED, IT GOT DARKER AND MUSLIMA WAS TAKEN TO THE SACRED MOUND, AND LAID IN THE EARTH, UNDER THE MULBERRY TREE, WHERE THE DESCENDENT OF THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD WAS BURIED.

AS IF THE SMALL MOUND OF LOOSE SOIL OVER MUSTAPHA'S GRAVE WAS A GROOM ON HIS WEDDING DAY, PEOPLE SHOWERED IT WITH FLOWERS, TOFFEES AND DRIED FRUITS.
DINNER, THAT NIGHT, WAS AT 3PM. IT TASTED LIKE SAWDUST AND COLD WATER.
A HAWKER SHOUTED HEADLINES OF THE DAY AS EVERYONE WAS EATING.
MUSTAPHA'S STORY WAS ON THE FRONT PAGE, BUT THE BLACK AND WHITE PICTURE OF A DISTORTED CORPSE LOOKED NOTHING LIKE THE MUSTAPHA THEY KNEW.
ON THAT UNFORTUNATE DAY, MUSTAPHA COULDN'T ESCAPE FROM THE CRACKDOWN. HE'D CAMOUFLAGED HIS FACE WITH GREASE.


MUSTAFA WAS TAKEN TO THE CROCKTOWN IDENTIFICATION PARADE, WHERE THE MECHANIC WAS SITTING IN THE ARMY VEHICLE.
AS SOON AS HE SAW MUSTAFA HE PRESSED THE HORN.
I AM A MECHANIC, NOT A MILITANT!
MUSTAFA AND OTHER PERSON WERE TAKEN ASIDE.
THEY WERE SHOT IN THE FACE AND THEY RIGHT THERE.
THEIR BODIES WERE THEN DRAGGED THROUGH THE STREETS OF SHIMWALOO UNTIL THERE WAS NO SKIN LEFT ON THEIR FACES.

ONLY CHEEK BONES AND HALF-CLOSED EYES. NOW THEY WERE BURIED NEARBY.
SHHHHHZ, LOOK, SOMEONE IS ON MUSTAFA'S GRAVE!
THAT MUST BE A MINION, READING AN EPITAPH.
CAN WE TAKE A CLOSER LOOK?
NO ONE WAS READING AN EPITAPH. IT WAS MTIWAZ. PICKING CHOCOLATES, TOFFEES, ALMONDS AND CASHEWS FROM MUSTAFA'S GRAVE.
MAY YOU DIE FROM KIDNEY CANCER, YOU BASTARD!

POMEGRANATES
AND SALT TEA

IT MUST BE TAKEN IN THE GRAVE.
PHHHH!
MUMMA! WAKE UP AND GET MILK FROM MAUL BEFORE SHE PUTS WATER TO IT. PAPA IS WAITING FOR HIS TEA.
WAKE UP! ABU, AKHTAR, YOU NEED TO GET READY FOR SCHOOL.
THE TRANSLUCENT MARBLE OF MUSTAFA'S EPITAPH LOOKED LIKE A LITTLE SHRINE THAT REFLECTED THE MORNING SUNLIGHT.
THE SKILLS OF THE CALLIGRAPHER WHO HAD ENGRAVED MUSTAFA'S NAME ON THE GRAVESTONE MADE THE HEADLINES OF THE URDU PAPER LOOK CLUMSY.

YOU KNOW OUR NEIGHBOUR ONCE POKED MUSTAFA & HE WOULD SHOOT HIS HOMOSEXUAL SON-IN-LAW WHO'D DECEITFULLY MARRIED HIS DAUGHTER TO INHERIT HIS PROPERTY. MUSTAFA BOOTED HIM AND SAID THAT HE WAS FIGHTING FOR THE FREEDOM OF KAMAMA.
A TRUE HERO. IF I GET RID OF HIS MURDERERS, I'LL BURN THEIR BALLS WITH A CUTTING TORCH.
MARALE'S WHITE AND MUST BE SOFT AS WELL.
MAMMA MUST HAVE DUMPED THAT HORSE NAMEPLATE IN THE PITS...
MAMMA, REMEMBER WE HAD THAT BROKEN MARALE HORSE NAME-PLATE? WHERE IS IT?
I FOUND IT. WE DON'T NEED THIS BROKEN NAMEPLATE, RIGHT?
WHICH NAMEPLATE? I'M NOT CLEANING UP WHATEVER, MAGS. YOU'RE MOVING UP THERE! DID YOU GET THE MILK? WE'RE STARVING!

BUT MARBLE WASN'T THAT SOFT...
IT BLUNTED ALL OF MY SHARP CHISELS.
PAPP, CHECK OUT THE EPITAPH!
NEVERTHELESS, HE MANAGED TO CARVE HIS NAME AND FILL THE CARVING WITH GREEN INK.
YOU THOT, DIDN'T TELL ME YOU USED MY CHISELS...
THESE CHISELS ARE MY BRAWN! I USE THEM TO MAKE A LIVING, AND NEED YOU!
WHY MUST YOU BE SO DIFFICULT? HUH?

DO I HAVE TO CHALK YOUR HEAD TO MAKE YOU UNDERSTAND?
CAN YOU YELL AT HIM LATER? MUMMA WE'VE GOT TO CHASE THE HENS AWAY FROM OUR GARDEN BEFORE THEY EAT ALL THE SPRING GREENS!

TO HELL WITH YOU!

YOU LITTLE BRAT, I'LL BREAK YOUR LEGS!
WATCH YOUR FOUL MOUTH BEFORE YELLING AT MY CHILDREN! YOUR HENS ARE WRECKING OUR VEGETABLE GARDEN. WHY CAN'T YOU LOCK THEM UP, BUT WHO HAS MONEY TO BUY POOP DURING THESE RESTRICTIONS?
HOLES IN YOUR FENCE ARE NO FAULT OF MY HENS!

MUNNU, I DIDN'T ASK YOU TO THROW STONES AT THE HENS. YOU ALMOST KILLED THEM!
MAMMA, SHE'S THE COCKROACH THAT POINTS OUT OUR DOOR TO THE ARMY DURING THE CRACKDOWN RAIDS.
THERE WAS ALWAYS SOME MUST B AND DUTTLE DURING THE DAY...
MUNNU, ARE YOU SURE YOU DON'T HAVE TO PEE? I'M TURNING THE LIGHTS OFF.
...BUT THE NIGHTS WERE QUIET.
MUST BE THIS DARK IN THE GRAVE.
SUFFO-CATING.
EVEN DUR-ING THE DAY.
MERCIFUL GOD! AND THIS IS JUST A BLANKET! MUSTAFA CAN'T EVEN BREAK OUT OF HIS GRAVE. TOO LATE. THE IDIOTS SEALED IT WITH CONCRETE.
ROR, BAMMAS, CAN WE TURN THE LIGHTS ON?
MUNNU, MUNNU... MIDNIGHT... QUIZZES IN THE GEOMETRY BOX...
ZZZ
OPEN THE DOOR, SHAHNAZ. SHAHNAZ!
KNOCK KNOCK
KNOCK KNOCK

STOP BREAKING THE DOOR DOWN, ITS MUNNU!!!
CAN I SLEEP IN YOUR ROOM?
OF COURSE. ARE YOU OK?
I DON'T KNOW. I DON'T WANT PEOPLE TO BURY ME AFTER I'M DEAD. IT MUST BE DARK IN THE GRAVE.
YOU'RE CRAZY, MUNNU.
I'M SERIOUS. WHAT IF MUSTAFA IS ALIVE? HE'S TRAPPED IN THE CONCRETE FOREVER NOW!
MUNNU, WHEN YOU DIE, YOU'RE DEAD. YOU FEEL NOTHING.
TRY TO SLEEP.
ZZZZ
YOU THINK CREMATION IS BETTER?
SHAHMUR?
WHAT?! NO, MUNNU!! CREMATION IS PROHIBITED IN ISLAM! YOU DON'T WANT TO WAKE UP IN THE MIDDLE OF THE FLAMES, DO YOU?
HELL, I WISH I HADN'T BEEN BORN AT ALL.
LISTEN, WHEN THE BARBER CUTS YOUR HAIR, DO YOU FEEL ANYTHING WHEN HE DUMPS IT IN THE TRASH BIN?
NO.
THAT IS EXACTLY HOW YOUR BODY IS WHEN YOU DIE. LIKE A CUT HAIR, YOU FEEL NOTHING.

I WANT PEOPLE TO WATCH MY MY BODY, BEAT ME UP AND MAKE SURE I'M DEAD BEFORE THEY BURY ME.
PRAY IN YOUR HEART THEN YOU WON'T BE SCARED ANYMORE.
PRAYERS REMIND ME OF THE FUNERALS, SHAWNAZ.
SHAWNAZ?
SHAWNAZ?
SHAWNAZ, CAN WE TURN THE LIGHTS ON?
SHAWNAZ?
NO! THE NEIGHBOURS CAN SEE THROUGH THE WINDOW, AND I'M A GIRL! LET ME SLEEP!
WHERE ARE YOU GOING? I'M NOT OPENING THE DOOR AGAIN.
BILAL, BILAL, OPEN THE DOOR, BILAL!
KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK
WHY ARE YOU STILL AWAKE, MUNNU?
CAN I SLEEP WITH YOU?
CAN WE TURN THE LIGHTS ON?
THERE'S NO ELECTRICITY. BUT I CAN LIGHT A CANDLE FOR YOU.
BILAL WAS ALWAYS THERE FOR MUNNU.

ALWAYS.
MAMMA SAID THAT WHEN SHE WAS PREGNANT WITH MUNNU, BILAL WAS TIME.
DELIVERY ROOM
ON THE DAY OF MUNNU'S BIRTH, THE MATERNITY HOSPITAL WAS CROWDED AS USUAL WITH WOMEN IN LABOUR. NOT MANY RELATIVES WERE ALLOWED TO WAIT. PAPA HAD GONE TO COLLECT THE NECESSARY MEDICINES.
HASEENA?
HASEENA?
BILAL WAS WITH MAMMA THE WHOLE TIME, THOUGH.
HASEENA?
THERE WAS ANOTHER HASEENA IN THE QUEUE AHEAD OF MAMMA. SHE WAS PREGNANT WITH HER FIRST CHILD.
BUT THE OTHER HASEENA GOT NERVOUS AND STAYED QUIET, AND MAMMA RAISED HER HAND BY INSTINCT.
I REPEAT, IS THERE A HASEENA HERE?
MY NAME IS HASEENA.

BILAL, I'LL BE RIGHT BACK. DON'T GO ANYWHERE
MAMMA WAS TAKEN INSIDE AND BILAL WAITED OUTSIDE.
AND WHEN MUNNU WAS BORN, HE WAS HANDED OVER TO BILAL.
MAMMA SAID THAT SHE WANTED A GIRL, NOT A BOY. MUNNU HAD WRINKLES everywhere LIKE A LITTLE OLD MAN.
BILAL WOULD TAKE MUNNU'S LIPS WITH DATES AND TOFFEES. AND THAT IS HOW MUNNU GOT ADDICTED TO SWEAR.
BILAL, BILAL! WAKE UP, WAKE UP!
YOU'RE SCRATCHING ME!
BILAL SLEPT WITH HIS MOUTH HALF-OPEN AND HIS EYES HALF-CLOSED.
JUST LIKE THE PHOTO OF MUSTAFA IN THE NEWSPAPER.
MAMMA, CAN I SLEEP WITH YOU? I'M SCARED OF THE DARK.
OF COURSE! COME IN, COME IN. IT'S LATE.
PAPA TURNED THE RADIO ON AND MUNNU FELL ASLEEP.

IT WAS VERY DARK BUT MUSTAFA'S GRAVESTONE REFLECTED THE GLOWING MOON IN THE SKY.
THE EPITAPH WAS BLANK.
IT WAS SHAKING AND GETTING BIGGER AND BIGGER.
THE GRAVE BURST INTO PIECES LIKE A VOLCANO OF WHITE FOAM AND MUSTAFA COVERED IN A BRIGHT WHITE SHROUD, ROSE OUT OF IT AS IF RISING FROM A BATHTUB.
HIS FEET FLOATED A FOOT ABOVE THE GROUND.
LIKE A BEAM OF LIGHT, HE PASSED THROUGH THE STREET, THE GATES AND THE DOORS LEADING TO THE ROOM WHERE MINNU, MAMMA AND PAPA WERE SLEEPING..

HIS KNOCKING SHOOK THE ROOM LIKE AN EARTHQUAKE.
BUMLOOOO!
MUNKU! MUNKU, WE'RE HERE! CALM DOWN. IT WAS A NIGHTMARE.
BLA-BLA-BLA-BLA.
YOU WANT SOME WUD?
GIVE HIM SOME KRGANS, TOO.
I PEED ON THE MATTRESS.
THE NIGHTMARES REWARDED FOR A FEW MORE WEEKS.
MUNKU, WASH YOUR ASS. WE'RE GOING TO VISIT PEER SAWIR.
WHY?
YOU WERE SCREAMING AGAIN LAST NIGHT. WE'LL ASK PEER SAWIR FOR SOME HEALING PRAYERS FOR YOU.

SIGHH, UH RAHMARAH RAHEEM...
PEER BRING MASHED MUNNU'S HEAD WITH A HORSESHOE.
WHAT BRING YOU IN?
BRR.
HIS SCHOOL IS CLOSED.
I SEE. WHEN IS IT GOING TO REOPEN?
YAGGGGEEEN...
I DON'T KNOW, IT DEPENDS WHEN THE PRAHY RELEASES THE PRINCIPAL.
TRUE. WAR TIMBARUKH. POUR A FEW GRAINS OF THE BLESSED SUGAR INTO HIS MOUTH BEFORE HE SLEEPS. GOD WILL TAKE CARE OF HIM. WE NEED TO PRAY.
CAN I HAVE A LITTLE MORE, PLEASE?
NO, MUNNU, THIS SUGAR IS BLESSED. YOU HAVE TO SAVE IT FOR NEXT TIME OR YOU'LL HAVE NIGHTMARES. RAHAH.
THE TIMBARUKH WAS SWEET AND MUNNU SLEPT TIGHT...

...UNTIL THE CRACKDOWN WAS INVOKED DOWN.
PAPA AND BULAL WERE TAKEN FOR THE CRACKDOWN IDENTIFICATION PARADE BY THE ARMY.
WHAT A CHOICE DO YOU HAVE MY UNCLES WITH GUNS?
WE ONLY HAVE RUNNERS, SIR.
AND THEN THEIR HOUSE WAS SEARCHED.
MAMMA PRAYED FOR THE SAFETY OF PAPA AND BULAL SEVERAL TIMES.
WHEN THE CRACKDOWN WAS LIFTED IN THE EVENING, YOUNG CHILDREN AND WOMEN WAITED IN THE STREET FOR THEIR KIN TO RETURN FROM THE CRACKDOWN PARADE.
BUT GUNSHOTS SPARKED A STAMPEDE.
GET BACK INSIDE! THE ARMY'S BLOODY ANGRY!
A YOUNG BOY FELL IN THE STREET LIKE A LOOSE OVERCOAT FROM A HANGER.

MISSENA, IS EVERYONE HOME?
YES, THANK GOD
MADAM, WOMAN!
WHAT?
HE WAS YOUNG. DRAGGED ON PUS ASS.
WHAT ARE YOU BABBLING ABOUT?
THIS BOY IN THE STREET OUTSIDE. GOD IS CRUEL.
HE GOT HIT BY A STRAY BULLET. HE WAS YOUNG.
IS THE HOLE BIG? IS IT BIG? WHERE, WHERE...
"HE WANTED TO LIVE."
PLEASE, SOMEONE ANSWER ME. IS THE HOLE BIG?
STOP BEHAVING LIKE A KID. IT'S JUST A SCRATCH. YOU DON'T EVEN NEED TO GO TO THE HOSPITAL. THEY CAN FIX THIS IN THE PHARMACY.
"OBVIOUSLY THE PASSERS-BY WERE TRYING TO COMFORT THE BABY."

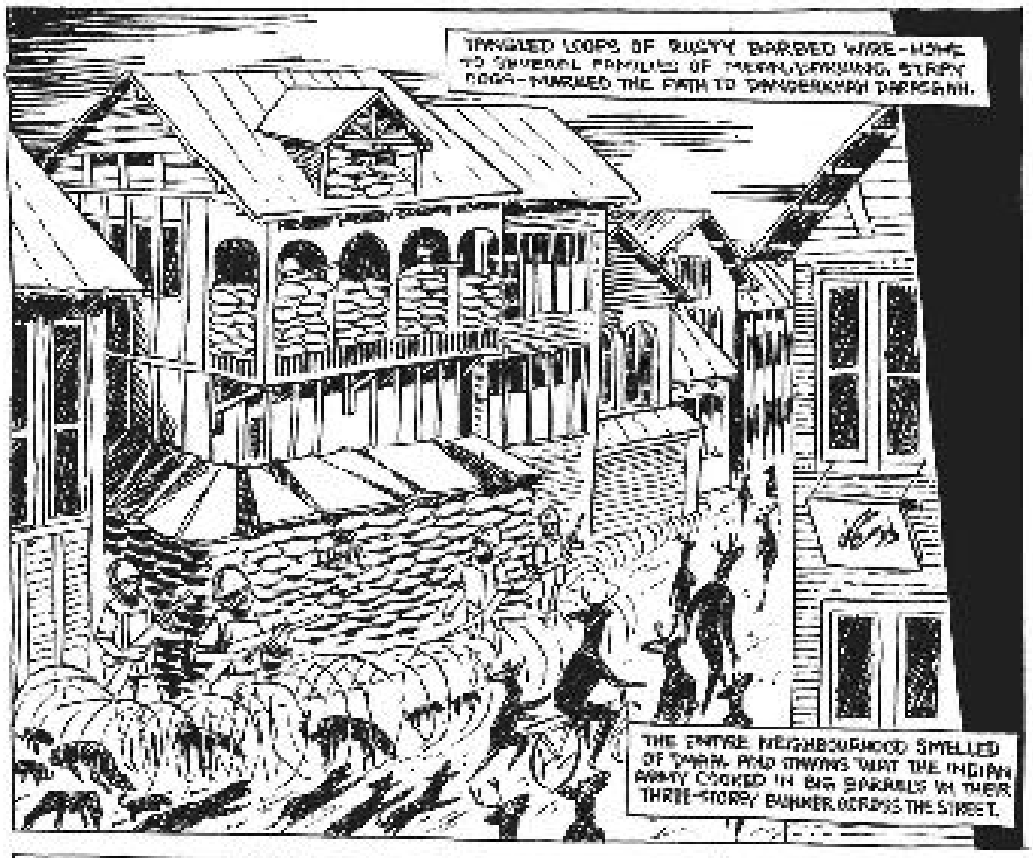
OH MERCY, MERCY! LOOK, THOSE BRUTES BLEW A HOLE IN MY BOY.
"THE KID WAS SHOCKED."
HE SNEERED...?
AND DARE?
IS HIS BODY STILL OUTSIDE?
NO, MUMMA. PEOPLE DRAGGED HIM AWAY FROM THE STAMPEDE.
WAS THE HOLE BIG?
MAYBE THAT BOY WASN'T FROM MUMMA'S NEIGHBOURHOOD—SOMEBODY WAS COMING, THAT NIGHT.
MUMMA, I TOLD YOU THIS IS THE TREEHOUSE, NOT JUST REGULAR SUGAR.
CRACKDOWN WAS ANNOUNCED AGAIN.
IT WAS GLOOMY THAT DAY.

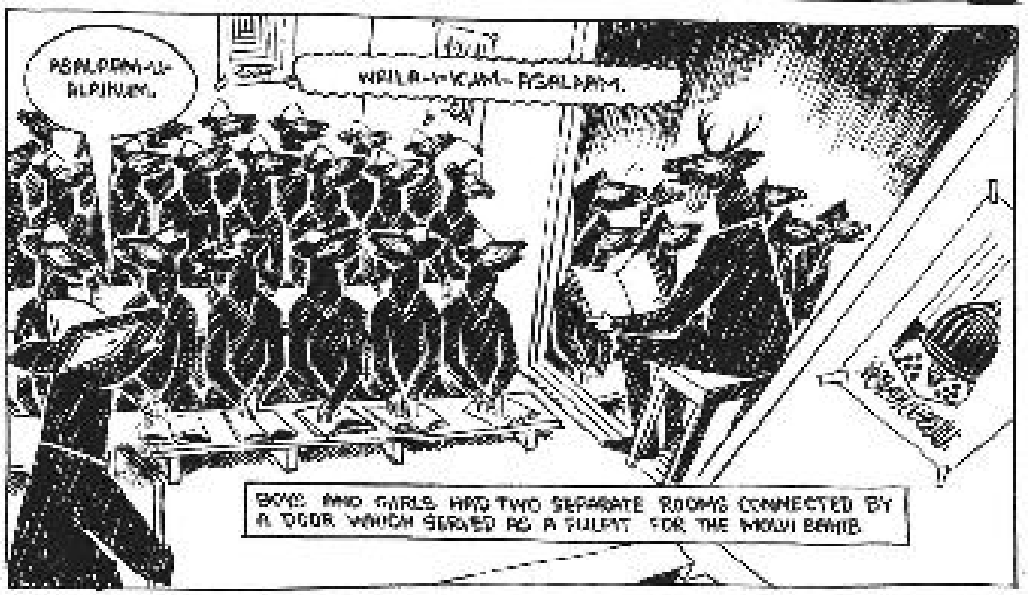
IN THE EVENING, MORE PEOPLE THAN USUAL RETURNED FROM THE PARADE. AS IF IT WAS EID MORNING, EVERYONE WAS WEARING NEW CLOTHES.
THE RUMOUR WAS THAT MUSTAFA HAD BEEN KILLED AGAIN.
ABIL AND AKHTAR DISAPPEARED INTO THE CROWD TO WATCH THE PARADE PASS BY.
BUT ONLY PAPA AND MAMMA WERE MOURNING.
MAMMA, STOP CRYING. I'M HERE.
BUT THEY ALSO DISAPPEARED IN THE CROWD.
AND SHAHNAZ APPEARED FROM NOWHERE. SHE LOOKED LIKE AN IMAGE ON A BROKEN MIRROR.

A COFFIN MADE OF SHEEP HIDE, THE COLOUR OF SALT TEA, WAS VISIBLE IN THE DISTANCE, BEING CARRIED ON PEOPLE'S SHOULDERS.
DON'T BURY MUSTAFA!
DON'T BURY HIM!
THEY IGNORED MUNNU AND PLACED MUSTAFA'S COFFIN NEXT TO AN EMPTY GRAVE.
MUNNU KICKED OPEN THE LID OF THE COFFIN TO SEE IF MUSTAFA WAS ALIVE.
I'M NOT LETTING YOU BURY HIM! AREN'T YOU LISTENING? DON'T DO IT!
BUT INSTEAD OF MUSTAFA, IT WAS BILAL SLEEPING IN THE COFFIN.
WAKE UP, BILAL! YOU'RE SCARING ME! BILALOO!
BILAL DIDN'T HUG MUNNU BACK. HIS EYES WERE HALF-CLOSED AND HIS MOUTH HALF-OPEN.

MUNNU SCREAMED LOUDLY, BUT HIS VOICE DIDN'T REACH THE PEOPLE.
WHERE ARE
MUNNU, IT'S A NIGHTMARE. WE'RE HERE. WAKE UP. WAKE UP!
HE IS MY BROTHER. DON'T BURN HIM!
HE'S STILL SWEATING.
WE SHOULD TAKE HIM TO BIRSPA FOR A FEW DAYS.
DON'T HURT HIM!
ARE YOU SERIOUS? HIS GRANDFATHERS ARE BLIND.
HE HAS TO GET USED TO THIS SITUATION, THEN, NOTHING ELSE CAN HEAL HIM.
I'LL TAKE HIM TO PEER SPA'S AGAIN.
PEER SPA'S PRESSED MUNNU'S EYELIDS WITH HIS THUMB.

HE NEEDS TO PLAY- HE IS LONELY AND BORED LIKE A FISH IN A TANK.
CHILDREN NEED COMPANY EVEN IF THEY BELONG TO A PROPHET.
HIS SCHOOL HASN'T REOPENED YET- HE DRIVES THE MOLVI SAHIB AT FIRTOUSABAD DARASGAH.
I DON'T KNOW WHERE ELSE TO TAKE HIM.
AH, I KNOW THAT MOLVI SAHIB.
THE HEAT OF THE PULPIT CAN EITHER MAKE ONE TWINE OR A DEVIL. TAKE MUNNU TO DANDERYKHAN DARASGAH INSTEAD. MY DAUGHTER GOES THERE, TOO.
THE MOLVI SAHIB THERE IS MY FRIEND. I'LL TALK TO HIM.
DANDERYKHAN DARASGAH IS RIGHT ON THE TOP OF THE BARBER'S SHOP WHERE YOU GET YOUR HAIR CUT. I'LL TAKE YOU THERE.
DON'T WORRY, I KNOW WHERE IT IS.
IF YOU SEE MY GIRLS THERE, JUST CALL THEM SISTERS. OKAY, CUTIES?
YES, MAMMA.

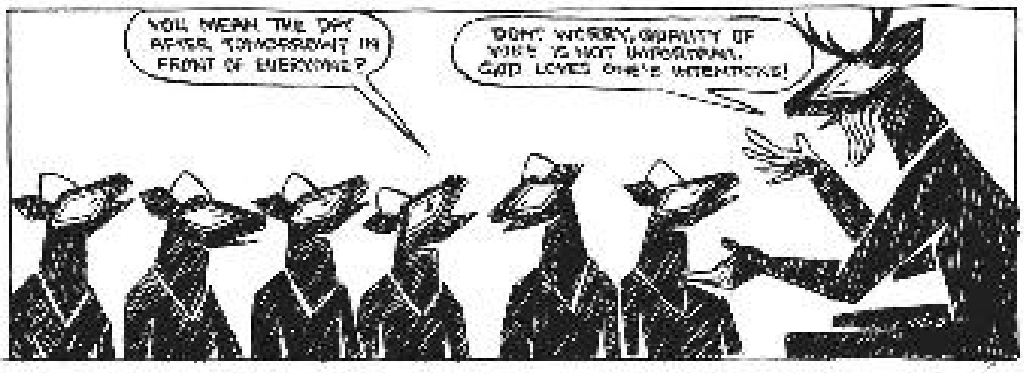

TANGLED LOOPS OF RUSTY BARBED WIRE—HOME TO SEVERAL FAMILIES OF MEAN-LOOKING STRAY DOGS—MARKED THE PATH TO DANGERKAPH PARSRAH.
THE ENTIRE NEIGHBOURHOOD SMELLED OF DARK, AND STAYING WHAT THE INDIAN ARMY COOKED IN BIG BARRELS IN THEIR THREE-STORY BUNKER ACROSS THE STREET.


PSALPRAH-U-ALPIKUM.
WRULA-V-KAM-PSALPRAH.
BOYS AND GIRLS HAD TWO SEPARATE ROOMS CONNECTED BY A DOOR WHICH SERVED AS A PULPIT FOR THE MOLVI BAHIB.

BROTHERS AND SISTERS, WE HAVE A NEW FRIEND HERE!
LOOK AT HIS INTERESTING, HE WRITES FINE CALLIGRAPHY.
YOU SHOULD ALL GET HIM TO WRITE YOUR NAMES ON YOUR NOTEBOOKS

I COPIED THESE POEMS FROM NEWSPAPERS, MOST BORE.
YOU SHOULD SING THEM FOR US.
THE NEW DORMITORY WAS LIKE A PLAYSCHOOL FOR OLDER KIDS.

I'VE NEVER SUNG BEFORE.
WELL THEN, YOU CAN RECITE ONE. WE ARE ORGANISING A BIG GATHERING ON FRIDAY AFTER PRAYERS AT THE CRICKET GROUND. MEMBERS
GATHERING.


YOU MEAN THE DAY AFTER TOMORROW? IN FRONT OF EVERYONE?
DON'T WORRY, QUALITY OF VOICE IS NOT IMPORTANT. GOD LOVES ONE'S INTENTIONS!

OH MEMORIES, GOD MAKE AN OUT OF MORE BROWN WITH THE LOVE OF YOUR BELIEVED...
OH GLORIOUS ALMIGHTY, WHOLE EXPANSION OF HEART...
MUNNU, DINNER'S READY. YOU NEED SOME FOOD IN YOUR BELLY TO FUEL THAT HIGH-PITCHED VOICE
OH ALMIGHTY GRANDIOUS ROD...
MUNNU, YOU'RE SPITTING IN THE PRESSURE COOKER!
WITH THE PRESSURE COOKER ECHOING EACH WORD, MUNNU FELL IN LOVE WITH HIS OWN VOICE.
KINDLY TOUCH THE HEART OF HIS HOME WITH YOUR DIVINE LIGHT...
MUNNU, YOU'RE A LOT BETTER NOW. FOR THE ALMIGHTY'S SAKE, PLEASE LET YOUR PARENTS SLEEP!
NIGHTMARES HAD NOW BEEN REPLACED BY REMEMBRANCE.

MAKE ME ONE OF THOSE WHO ARE BURNING WITH THE LOVE OF YOUR BELOVED..
MUMMU, DON'T MENTION SACRED NAMES ON THE TOILET!
OH PLEASURE! WHICH TOUCH MY HEART...
ON FRIDAY MUMMU WAS CONFIDENT.
THE VICTIMS WERE AT A BIG, CRACKED GROUND, OF WHICH ONLY THE PITCH REMAINED. THE REST WAS COVERED WITH THE BONES OF THE MARTYRS.
A LARGE CROWD HAD GATHERED AROUND A GRAVE AT THE FOOT OF A POMEGRANATE TREE.

PEER SAHIB, WHO HAD CURED MUNNA'S NIGHTMARES, CONSOLED THE MOURNERS AND AN OLD MAN WHO HAD A CRESCENT TATTOOED ON HIS VERY HAND, HE WAS AJAZ'S FATHER.

DON'T FOOL YOURSELF BY THINKING THAT MORTAS DIE. NO. NEVER!
THEY LIVE FOREVER.
HE PASSED AWAY DEFENDING THE HONOUR OF HIS SISTER, OUR SISTER.
BROTHER
WE WANT FREEDOM!
INDIAN DOGS, GO BACK!
WE WANT FREEDOM!
INDIAN DOGS GET OUT!
"THE COWARDLY AND ARROGANT OPPRESSORS PUT BRAVE ALBERT IN THE PRISON AFTER PICKING HIM OUT FROM A CRACKDOWN PARADE."
FREED
"FISHING WAS THE EXCUSE THAT THE DEVILS USED TO TARNISH THE HONOUR OF OUR SISTER WHO HAD GONE TO VISIT HER ONLY BROTHER IN THE PRISON."
"THE INMATES IN THE JAIL COULD NOT BEAR TO WITNESS WHAT THEY WERE FORCED TO SEE."
"THEY RAISED AN OUTCRY."

"MARTYRS DO NOT DIE."
THEY LIVE IN OUR HEARTS.
THE POMEGRANATE TREE HERE REMINDS ME OF A STORY I MUST SHARE WITH YOU, AND ESPECIALLY WITH ROMO'S PROUD FATHER.
ONCE UPON A TIME, A FATHER LOST HIS SON IN A BATTLE AGAINST EVIL...
"THE FATHER VISITED HIS SON EVERY DAY AND WEPT AT HIS GRAVE FOR HOURS."
"ONE DAY HE FELL ASLEEP ON THE GRAVE."
"HE DREAMED OF A POMEGRANATE TREE BEARING THE FRUIT OF PARADISE ON ITS EVERY BRANCH."

"ONE POMEGRANATE ON THE TREE WAS SO RIPE THAT ITS SHELL HAD RUPTURED AND ITS JUICE WAS RUNNING OUT."
"HIS GAZE FOLLOWED THE DRIBBLE OF FRESH POMEGRANATE JUICE AND WHAT HE SAW FILLED HIS MELANCHOLIC HEART WITH JOY."
"THE JUICE WAS DRIPPING INTO THE MOUTH OF HIS BELOVED SON, SLEEPING LIKE A NEWBORN IN A GRAVE FULL OF DIVINE LIGHT."

WHAT THE FATHER SAW IN HIS DREAM WAS MORE CERTAIN THAN THE ILLUSION OF THIS FLEETING WORLD.

MAY GOD BESTOW JOY AND PATIENCE ON MARY'S FATHER, AS WELL.
AMEEN.

ITS THE PRAYERS FINISHED, PEOPLE KISSED THE HANDS OF THE OLD MAN AND WALKED TO THE TENT WHERE SALT TEA WAS BEING SERVED.

MUNNA JOINED THE CIRCLE WHERE MOM SAHIB AND MANY CHILDREN WERE READING THE QURAN.
MUNNA UNFOLDED HIS POEM AND SAT NEXT TO THE MICROPHONE. ALAZIS FATHER SAT NEXT TO HIM.
AND POURED HIM SAAT TEA.
HIS FACE SHONE WITH THE TEARS THAT HAD DRIED ON HIS FACE.
YOU MUST HAVE THIS BREAD AS WELL OR MY SON WILL BE REALLY DISAPPOINTED.
THOSE HANDS MUST HAVE LIFTED ALAZIS BODY.

NOW THEY ARE HOLDING A PIECE OF BREAD NEAR ME.
MUNNU WRENCHED THE BREAD AND ATE IT IMMEDIATELY AS IF HE WAS STRUGGLING TO KEEP THE OLD MAN'S HANDS GETTING ANY CLOSER TO HIM.
BUT IN HIS STOMACH IT FELT AS IF THE BREAD WAS FLOATING WITH THE OLD MAN'S HANDS STILL HOLDING IT, LIKE A CHUNK OF RAW FLESH IN THE BELLY OF A CANNIBAL.
WHERE ARE YOU GOING?
THE TENT FELT LIKE A MORGUE FULL OF BREATHING CORPSES.
...AND MUNNU RAN AWAY TO OVERCOME HIS DREADFUL NAUSEA.

ABBA AND NANNI

MUMMU, PINCH THOSE GRAPES. NO ONE'S HERE.
NO, PAPA. THEY'RE FOR YOU.
PAPA WAS IN PAIN. HE WAS COUGHING UP INK AND BLOOD.
BILAL IS TOO YOUNG TO SHOULDER THE FAMILY BURDEN, TOO YOUNG.
MUMMU, WOULD YOU CHECK WHO'S ON THE VERANDA?
ABBA! PAPA, IT IS ABBA AND NANNI!
FORGIVE ME, MUMMU. I DIDN'T BRING ERRANDS THIS TIME.
ABBA, PAPA ISN'T WELL.
WE CAN'T EVEN AFFORD TO SERVE THEM A CUP OF TEA!
DON'T WEEP, SWEET-HEART. I'LL SMOKE CHILLI AND PRAY FOR PAPA. GOD WILL HAVE TO ANSWER MY PRAYERS.
HASEENA, BRING ME A GLASS OF WARM WATER. AND WHERE IS GHULAM?

GULYA, WAKE UP! WHERE ARE YOU FEELING THE PAIN?
IT'S EVERYWHERE! SHIVERING FROM MY THROAT.
MAREENA, WHERE'S ROLL? ASK HIM TO BUY SOME TAWGHIR FROM THE BREWER.
ARE YOU SERIOUS? WE BARELY MADE IT HERE! THE ARMY HAVE CORDONED OFF THIS WHOLE AREA.
WELL, I NEED TO FREE MY SON FROM THIS AWFUL PAIN.
IS THERE A CURFEW OUTSIDE?
NOT A CURFEW, BUT THE ARMY HAVE BLOCKED THE ROADS. THANK GOD I'M BLIND. I'M SORRY IT'S SUCH A LONG TIME SINCE I LAST VISITED. I WAS WORRIED THAT THE ARMY MIGHT TAKE OVER MY HOUSE, TOO.
WHAT DOES THAT HAVE TO DO WITH THE ARMY AROUND HERE? YOU'RE NOT MAKING ANY SENSE.
CALM DOWN, AND LET ME CATCH MY BREATH. YOU KNOW THAT THREE-STOREY HOUSE NEXT TO OUR PLACE IN EDGRAH? WELL, NOW THE ARMY HAVE TAKEN IT OVER.

"WE HAD DEVELOPED THIS SORT OF FRIENDSHIP WITH THEM TO AVOID THEIR BEATINGS."
WATCH OUT!
DON'T WORRY, KID. I KNOW THESE STREETS BY HEART.
BUT NOW THEY DON'T SPARE US, EITHER.
"THEY USED TO TRUSS EVERYONE EXCEPT US."

WE KNOW NOTHING!
WE'RE BOTH BLIND!
"WE KEEP TELLING THEM THAT WE CAN'T SEE, THAT WE ARE OLD AND BLIND. BUT THEY'RE IN A FRENZY."

"THE WORST THING IS THAT WE CAN'T SEE WHERE THEY'RE GOING TO HIT NEXT."

BUT THAT'S EXPECTED; I'M NOT MAD ABOUT THAT.
WHY WHY NOT YOU COME HERE, THEN?

DON'T TALK ABOUT IT, NOT IF YOU'RE IN PAIN. THESE MILITANTS HAVE BEEN TRYING TO BLOW UP THE ARMY'S NEW BARRACKS WITH ROCKETS.
"BUT EVERY TIME, THOSE AMATEURS MISS THE TARGET! THE ARMY THEN CORDON OFF THE WHOLE AREA AND VENT THEIR ANGER ON THOSE WHO STEP OUT OF THEIR HOUSES."
LAST NIGHT A SHELL HIT OUR HOUSE.
WHAT?! THE HOUSE IS WRECKED?
ONLY A FEW WINDOWS AND SOME SMALL HOLES IN THE WALLS. CALM DOWN.
YOU SHOULD BE THANKING GOD THAT WE SURVIVED. WE LAID FLAT ON THE FLOOR THROUGHOUT THE NIGHT UNTIL WE HEARD THE CALL FOR THE MORNING PRAYERS.
BUT THAT'S EXPECTED. I'M NOT ANGRY ABOUT THAT.
OH, SO THERE'S MORE TO THE STORY?
WHY DON'T YOU SHUT UP IF YOU ARE SICK? I JUST WANT TO CONFRONT THESE LOOTERS AND ASK THEM WHY THEY ALWAYS MISS THEIR TARGET!
YOU SHOULD ASK THEM TO TARGET YOUR HOUSE.

OBVIOUSLY THE VILL MUST FIND WILL HIT THE MOON WA HA H - OUCH! MY THROAT HURTS.
IT'S NOT FUNNY, GUNNA. YOUR MOTHER IS STILL SHAKING.
WE THOUGHT IT MIGHT BE SAFER HERE, BUT IT'S WORSE.
WHY? EVERYTHING IS NORMAL- JUST A FEW CRACKDOWNS A WEEK.
ARE YOU SERIOUS? YOU DON'T KNOW? I GUESS YOU NEED TO CUT DOWN THE FERNS IN THE GARDEN TO SEE THE WORLD OUTSIDE.
"YOUR NEIGHBOURS SAVED US"
STOP! STOP! THE ROAD AHEAD IS BLOCKED BY THE ARMY.
WE HAVE TO GET TO SHULBINE HOUSE- THE COPPERSMITH WAS BLIND.
HE LIVES NEARBY. I'LL TAKE YOU THERE.
WHY IS THE ROAD BLOCKED?
DON'T WORRY, THIS IS BUSINESS AS USUAL... THE ARMY PICKED UP SOME KID AND STAT HIM TO A TRIAL UNTIL HE BROKE DOWN AND LED THE COWBOY HERE.

MAY GOD PROTECT YOU. THANKS FOR BEING THE EYES OF A BLIND OLD MAN, SON.
BATMAN LOO COULD BE ON FIRE AND YOU'D BE SIPPING SALT TEA INSIDE.
BUT THERE WERE PEOPLE IN THE STREET; I THINK ROIL COULD GET SOME TRASHCAN FROM THE BREAKER.
SULYA, HAVE YOU BEEN SMOKING A LOT LATELY?
I ALWAYS SMOKE A LOT. I THINK IT'S THE WICK BURNING FROM THE KEROSENE STOVE THAT MADE ME ILL.
ROIL, ARKTAR, CAN YOU GET TRASHER FROM THE RABBIN STORE? TELL HIM WELL PAY NEXT WEEK. HOLD EACH OTHER TIGHT AND DON'T WANDER AROUND.
BYLAL, YOU'RE STAYING HERE, ROIL AND ARKTAR ARE GOING.

WHAT DID THE DOCTORS...?
OH, THOSE BASTARDS SCARED MY FAMILY.
MAMMA! MAMMA! WE GOTTA GO, THERE'S A BIG PROCESSION OUTSIDE CARRYING SOME MARTYRS...
YOU SHOULD SEE THEIR BODIES—THEY LOOK LIKE STATUES WITH THEIR ARMS POINTING TOWARDS THE SKY!
THANK GOD I HAVE NO EYES.
BILALA, WHERE THE HELL ARE YOU GOING?
DON'T GO, PLEASE, I BEG YOU, FOR THE PROPHET'S SAKE. BILALA, PLEASE!
PEACE BE UPON HIM. HAWEENA, THERE ARE HUNDREDS OF OTHERS IN THE STREETS. BILAL WILL BE FINE.
I'VE FRIED THEM WITH MY BLOOD, NOT CANCER. GHULAM IS DYING!
SHUT UP! NO ONE IS DYING HERE. YOU'RE MAKING THINGS UP IN YOUR MIND.

BALEL SOON RETURNED.
MAMMA, STOP CRYING. I JUST WANTED TO CHECK IF MY SHOPS WERE OPEN.
WHY DIDN'T YOU BRING SOME POISON FOR ME? I WANT TO REST IN PEACE RIGHT NOW!
OH, DON'T BE SO DRAMATIC. EVEN TROPLERS WERE OUTSIDE! HERE, I BROUGHT TRABASHIR FOR PAPA.
SO WHO DIED? MAYBE FROM OUR NEIGHBORHOOD?
NAH, THEY WERE FROM THE OLD CITY.
WAS THE INFORMER FROM HERE?
MANNI GROUND THE TRABASHIR IN A MORTAR.
I DON'T THINK HE WAS AN INFORMER. I HEARD THEY TORTURED HIM REPEATEDLY UNTIL HE SPILLED ALL THE INFORMATION.

"THEN HE LED THEM TO A HOUSE WHERE THE MILITANTS WERE HIDING. BUT HE DIDN'T TELL THEM THE EXACT LOCATION OF THE HIDEOUT IN THE HOUSE."

"ONLY AFTER ONE MORE ROUND OF TORTURE DID HE POINT HIS FINGER AT THE CEILING."

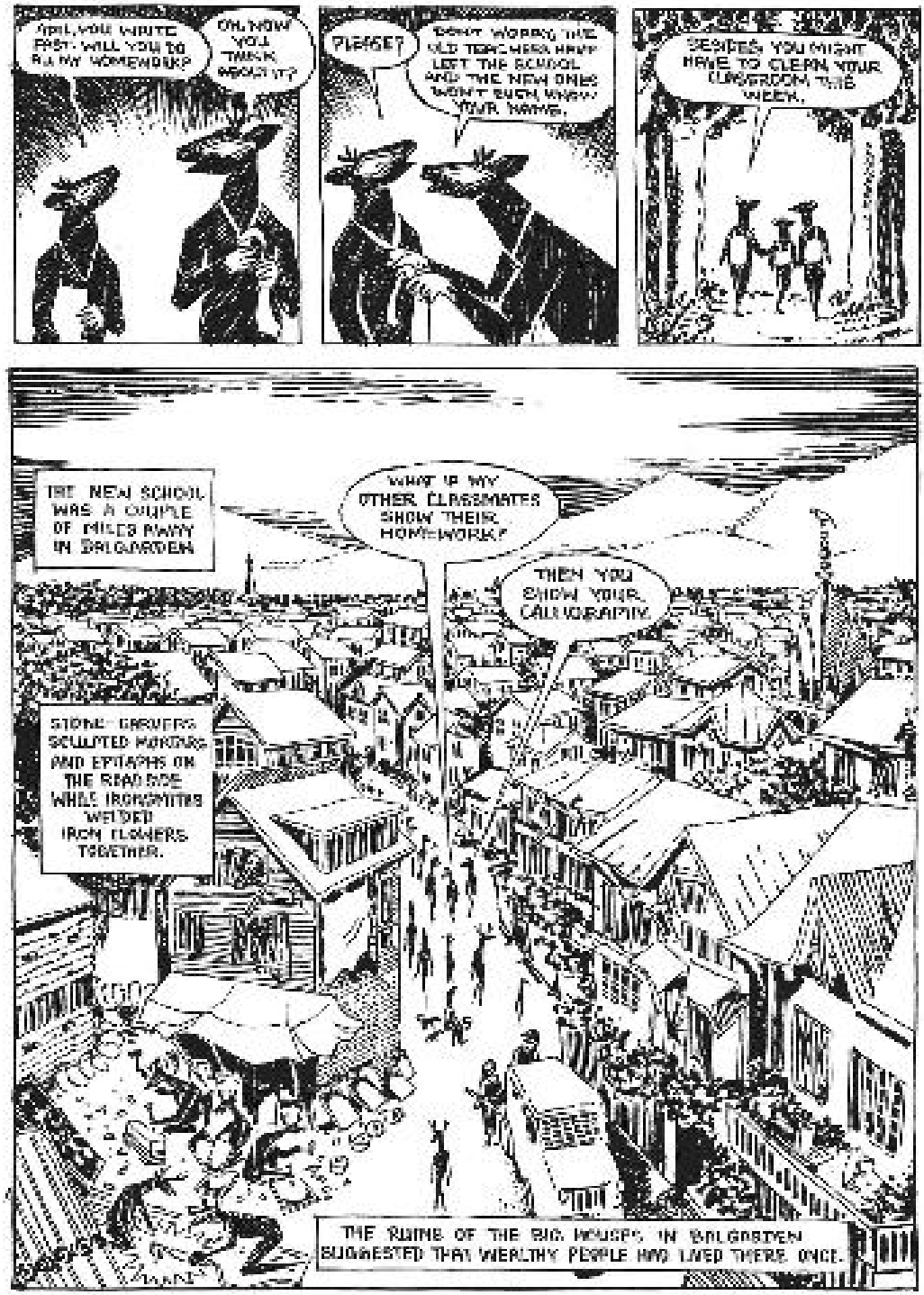
GULYA, I'M TELLING YOU... BRAHMALOO WOULD BE ON FIRE AND YOU'D STILL BE HERE CORRECTING THE KIDS. LET'S GET THE TREES CHOPPED DOWN.
DON'T MAKE HIM TALK. HE'S IN PAIN. AND SHUT DOWN YOUR BRAIN. I'M TRYING TO THINK.
OPEN YOUR MOUTH, GULYA, THE TABASWIR IS READY.
IT WILL SUCK OUT ALL THE VIRUS, BUT DON'T SWALLOW IT. SPIT IT OUT... TO REMEMBER, VA TASTEBOSH...
NOW GET UP AND SPIT OUT ALL YOUR DISEASE. THE CREATOR OF THIS UNIVERSE HAS BLESSED YOU WITH A NEW LIFE!
NANNI KEPT GIVING PAPA TABASWIR DOSES EVERYDAY, AND THE COLOUR OF HIS SKIN SLOWLY RETURNED. PAPA SPAT BLACK TAR-LIKE VIRUS FOR MONTHS.
A COUPLE OF MONTHS LATER, PAPA WENT BACK TO ENGRAVING COPPER OBJECTS.
DOCTORS CALLED IT A MIRACLE

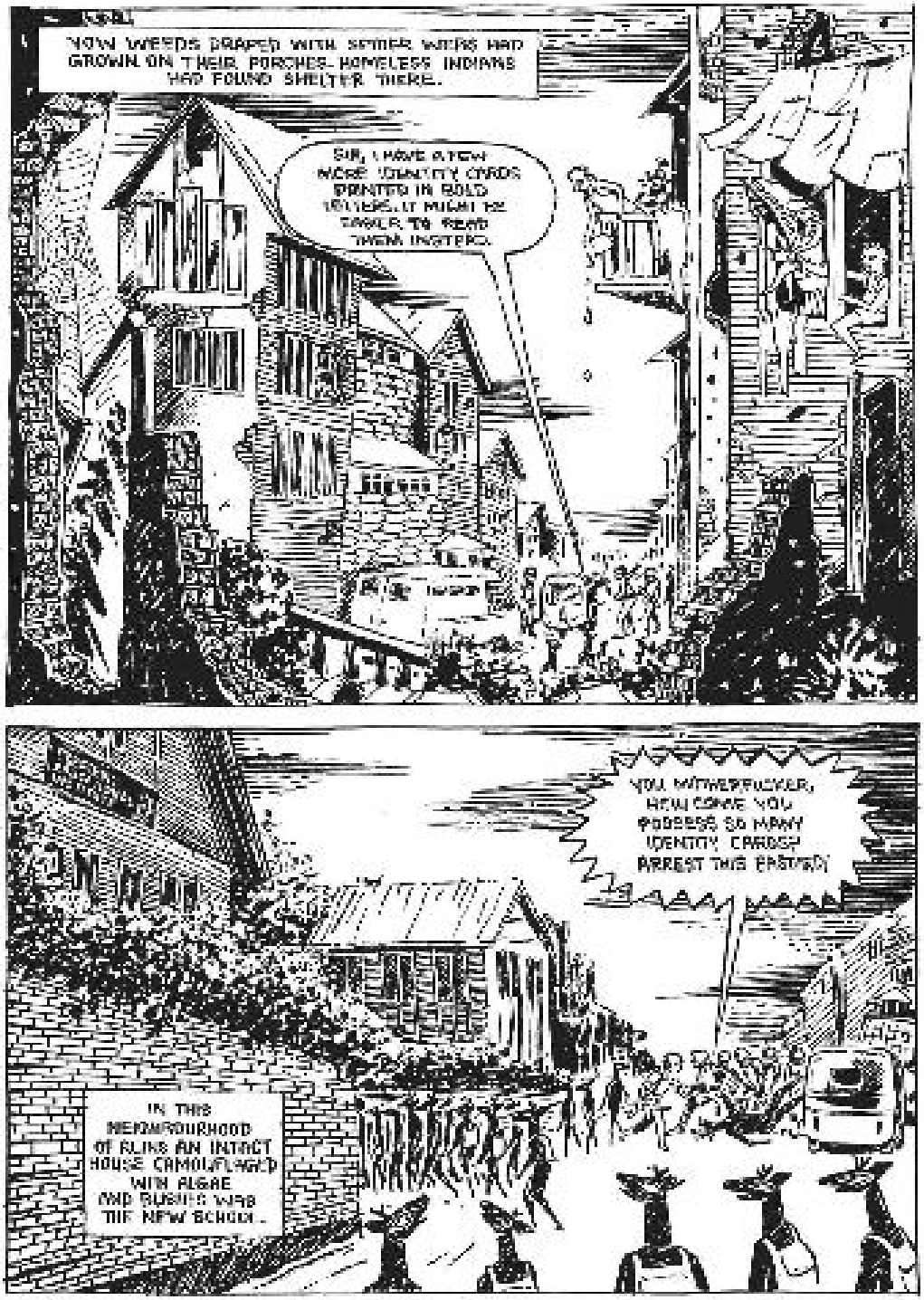
KOYAS KOYAS

MUNNU GET OFF MY BACK.
PLEASE, AGAIN! I WON'T HURT YOU!
THERE'S NO NEED TO WAIT FOR ROM-I CAN TRIM YOUR BEARD AND SHAVE YOUR HEAD, PLEASE?
PLEASE! PLEASE! I WON'T GET OFF OTHERWISE!
DON'T MAKE ME LOOK LIKE AN IDIOT FOR TRUSTING YOU, MUNNU.
STAY STILL.
SHAVE THOSE PATCHES, I'M WARNING YOU, MUNNU.
JUST ONE MORE MINUTE AND I'LL SHAVE ALL OF IT.
MUNNU WOULD INDULGE IN MAKING HIM TATTOOS OF STARS AND CRESCENTS ON ABBAS'S SCALP.
DOES IT HURT?
OUCH!
WHICH BLUNTED THE RAZORS AND SOMETIMES CAUSED CUTS.
AFTER SHAVING ABBAS'S SCALP AND TRIMMING HIS BEARD, MUNNU WOULD ACCOMPANY HIM TO BATHHOUSE OR SHRINE.

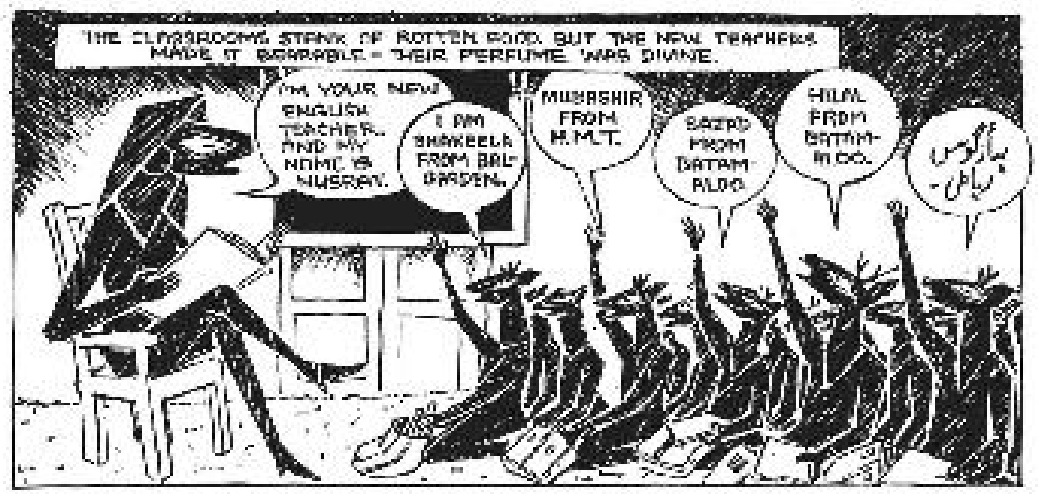
MUNNU, DID YOU ENJOY THE FRANKS AND THE SERMONS?
I DIDN'T ENJOY A THING.
THE WHOLE VOICE WAS HEART-WARMING.
I HAD TO PEE.
WHY DIDN'T YOU?
THE MOSQUE WAS OUTNUMBERED AND I WOULD HAVE LOST YOU IF I'D MOVED AWAY FROM YOU.
THAT WAS WISE! YOU DESERVE A TREMPTION.
I WANT SWEETS, SOME BMERUK.
WE'LL TAKE SOME FOR BHAWAN AS WELL.
ABBA MADE FRIDAYS SPECIAL
ABBA, I KNOW YOU CAN'T PEE-- BUT STILL THE SUN IS SO BRIGHT. CAN'T YOU EVEN SEE A SINGLE RAY?
NO, MUNNU. BUT MY EYES HURT WHEN I STARE DIRECTLY INTO THE SUN.

ISN'T IT SUFFOCATING? AREN'T YOU SICK OF IT?
I'M USED TO IT.
DON'T YOU EVER WANT TO SEE ANYTHING?
OH, IF THAT WAS POSSIBLE I'D LOVE TO SEE YOUR FACES.
MUNNU, I'VE GOT GOOD NEWS FOR YOU. BUT GIVE US SOME SUBRUK FIRST, THEN WE'LL TELL YOU.
ADIL, SAY WHAT IT IS I'LL GIVE YOU SUBRUK AS WELL.
OUR NEW SCHOOL GOT GOVERNMENT RECOGNITION AND YOU HAVE TO START ON MONDAY.
TELL ME YOU'RE KIDDING.
AN AWFUL DREAD OF SCHOOL TURNED MUNNU NUMB. TEACHERS MIGHT UNDRESS HIM, SMEAR HIS BODY WITH CLAY, TAB HIS ARMS, LEGS AND BUTTOCKS WITH NETTLE, AND THEN MARCH HIM THROUGH EVERY CLASSROOM. THAT WAS THE PUNISHMENT FOR NOT DOING ONE'S HOMEWORK.


AND, YOU WRITE FAST. WILL YOU DO ALL MY HOMEWORK?
OH, NOW YOU THINK ABOUT IT?
PLEASE?
DON'T WORRY, THE OLD TEACHERS HAVE LEFT THE SCHOOL AND THE NEW ONES WON'T EVEN KNOW YOUR NAME.
BESIDES, YOU MIGHT HAVE TO CLEAN YOUR CLASSROOM THIS WEEK.
THE NEW SCHOOL WAS A COUPLE OF MILES AWAY IN BALGARDEN.
WHAT IF MY OTHER CLASSMATES SHOW THEIR HOMEWORK?
THEN YOU SHOW YOUR CALLIGRAPHY.
STONE-CARVERS SCULPTED MOTTOES AND EPITAPHS ON THE ROADSIDE WHILE IRONSMITHS WELDED IRON FLOWERS TOGETHER.
THE RUINS OF THE BIG HOUSES IN BALGARDEN SUGGESTED THAT WEALTHY PEOPLE HAD LIVED THERE ONCE.

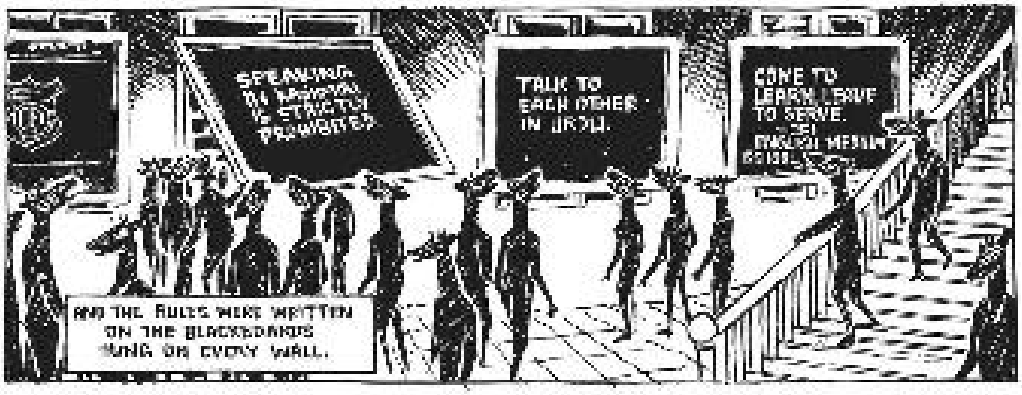

NOW WEEDS DRAPED WITH SPIDER WEBS HAD GROWN ON THEIR PORCHES- HOMELESS INDIANS HAD FOUND SHELTER THERE.
SIR, I HAVE A FEW MORE IDENTITY CARDS PRINTED IN BOLD LETTERS. IT MIGHT BE EASIER TO READ THEM INSTEAD.
YOU MOTHERFUCKER, HOW COME YOU POSSESS SO MANY IDENTITY CARDS? ARREST THIS BASTARD!
IN THIS NEIGHBOURHOOD OF ELKS AN INTACT HOUSE CAMOUFLAGED WITH ALGAE AND BUSHES WAS THE NEW SCHOOL.

DEAR STUDENTS. I AM INCREDIBLY HAPPY TO SEE YOU HERE!
WITH THE NEW TEACHERS AND UP-TO-DATE SYLLABUS I CAN PROMISE YOU A HIGHER STANDARD OF EDUCATION!
MORNING ASSEMBLY WAS LIKE A GAME OF HIDE AND SEEK. THOSE WHO WERE WEARING DIRTY SHIRTS OR UNPOLISHED SHOES WOULD HIDE BEHIND THE THICK BUSHES.
OUR BELIEF HAS LED US TO RENAME THIS SCHOOL THE CRESCENT EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTE. TONGUE-TWISTING, ISN'T IT?
BUT YOU'LL SOON GET USED TO IT! REPEAT IT WITH ME...
CRESCENT...
CRESCENT!
EDUCATIONAL...
EDUCATIONAL!
INSTITUTE...
INSTITUTE!


THE CLASSROOM'S STINK OF ROTTEN FOOD BUT THE NEW TEACHERS MADE IT BEARABLE - THEIR PERFUME WAS DIVINE.
I'M YOUR NEW ENGLISH TEACHER... AND MY NAME IS MUSRAY.
I AM SHAKEELA FROM BAG GARDEN.
MUBASHIR FROM H.M.T.
SAZID FROM BATAM-ALDO.
HILAL FROM BATAM-MOO.

YOU, UNCIVILIZED BRAT! WE DON'T WANT TO HEAR ANY KASHMIRI HERE.

UNDERSTOOD?
YES!
YES!
YES!
HE RIWAZ!
DISCIPLINE WAS MANDATORY HERE.

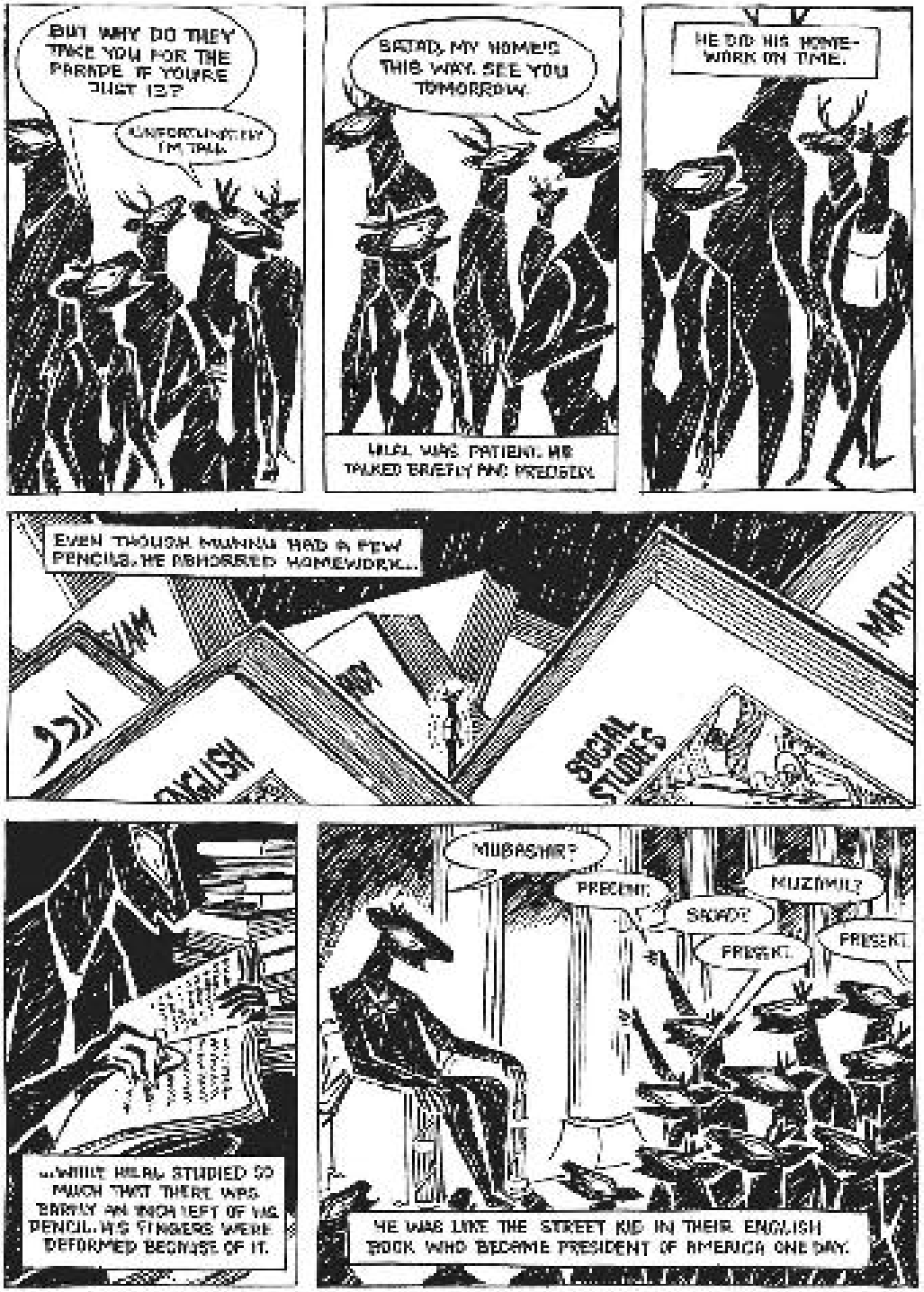

SPEAKING IN KASHMIRI IS STRICTLY PROHIBITED
TALK TO EACH OTHER IN URDU.
COME TO LEARN, LEAVE TO SERVE.
AND THE RULES WERE WRITTEN ON THE BLACKBOARDS HUNG ON EVERY WALL.

THE CUPBOARDS BEHIND THOSE BLACKBOARDS INTERESTED THE STUDENTS MORE, THOUGH.

* KASHMIRI HINDUS.

WHERE WERE YOU WHEN MY HOME WAS DESTROYED? WHERE WERE YOU WHEN MY FAMILY WAS BURNED ALIVE? WHERE WERE YOU? ANSWER ME!
RIYAZ, ZIP YOUR MOUTH! THE TERRORISTS WILL HEAR YOU!
ISN'T THAT HOW BOLLYWOOD HEROES YELL AT THE GODS IN THEIR MOVIES?
AND WHAT IF A NON-MUSLIM TREATED A PICTURE OF MECCA THIS WAY?
YOU ZIP YOUR MOUTH. THEY'RE THE GODS OF THE INDIANS AND THE FUCKING INDIAN ARMY.
DON'T SPIT ON IT, IT'S A SIN!
GOD, DID THAT FEEL GOOD? HUH? YOU WANT A MASSAGE?
KOYAS

RIYAZ GOT WHAT WAS COMING TO HIM AS SOON AS THE TEACHERS FOUND OUT.
SORRY, SIR. MIS-TAKE. NEVER REPEAT.
MONITOR
AND HILAL WAS MADE THE MONITOR OF THEIR CLASS FOR INFORMING ON RIYAZ...
SORRY! PLEASE, I'M FAINTING.
YOU WANT SOME COOKIES.
AND WITH THAT STATUS, HILAL BECAME THE EYES AND MOUTH OF THE TEACHERS. HE COLLECTED HOMEWORK FROM THE STUDENTS AND BEHAVED LIKE A TEACHER.
CAN I WALK WITH YOU? I LIVE IN SATAMALOO AS WELL.
YOUR CHOICE.
THANKS. DOES THE WAY TAKE YOU FOR THE CRACKDOWN PARADE?
SOME-TIMES.
HOW OLD ARE YOU?
13.
I'M ONLY 6 AND A HALF. DO YOU HAVE ANY SIBLINGS?
ONE BROTHER AND THREE SISTERS.
REALLY? I HAVE THREE BROTHERS AND ONE SISTER!
SO MUNNU TRIED TO BEFRIEND HILAL.

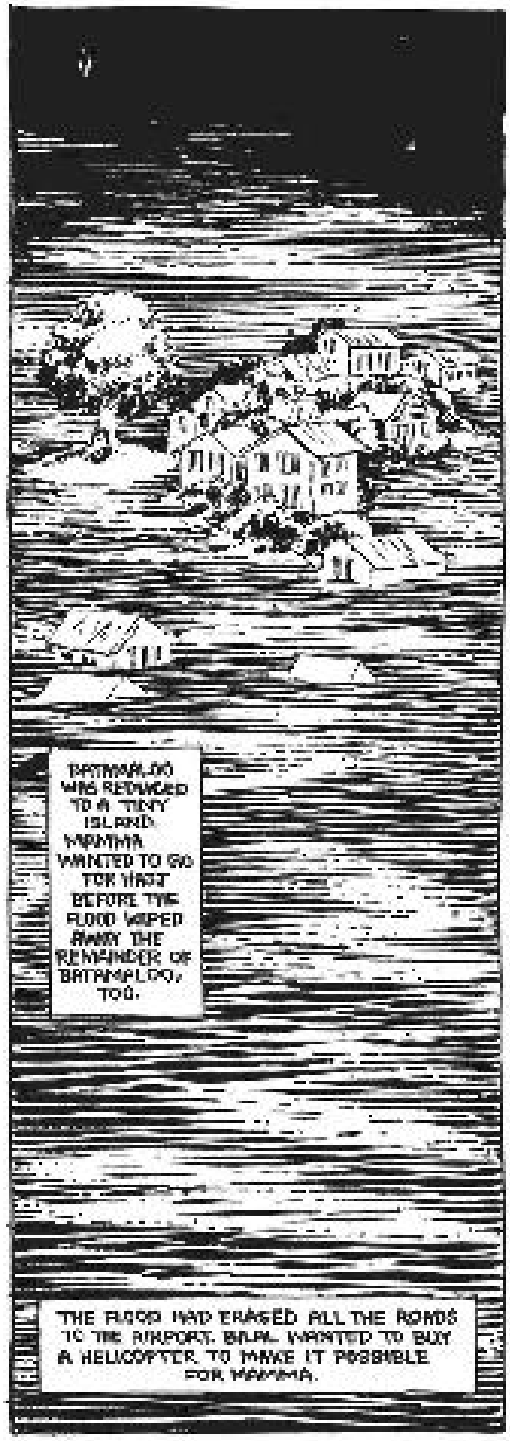

BUT WHY DO THEY TAKE YOU FOR THE PARADE IF YOU'RE JUST 13?
UNFORTUNATELY I'M TALL.
SAFAD, MY NOMBER'S THIS WAY. SEE YOU TOMORROW.
HILAL WAS PATIENT. HE TALKED BRIEFLY AND PRESENT.
HE DID HIS HOME-WORK ON TIME.
EVEN THOUGH MUNNU HAD A FEW PENCILS, HE IGNORED HOMEWORK...
MATH
SOCIAL STUDIES
...WHILE HILAL STUDIED SO MUCH THAT THERE WAS BARELY AN INCH LEFT OF HIS PENCIL. HIS FINGERS WERE DEFORMED BECAUSE OF IT.
MUBASHIR?
PRESENT.
SAJAD?
MUZAMIL?
PRESENT.
PRESENT.
HE WAS LIKE THE STREET KID IN THEIR ENGLISH BOOK WHO BECAME PRESIDENT OF AMERICA ONE DAY.

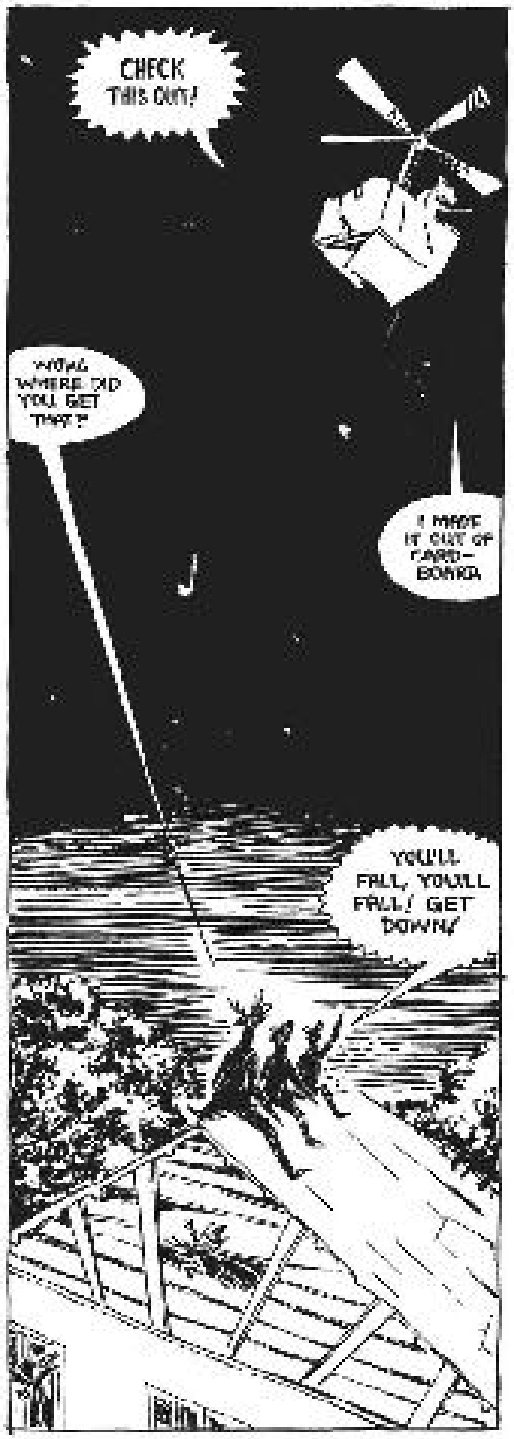
HILDE, HILDE, CAN I WALK WITH YOU?
SIGH, I DON'T KNOW.
SO HOW MANY PEOPLE HAVE DIED IN YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD?
LOTS.
YOU KNOW, THE ARMY SHOT FOUR MILITANTS IN OUR NEIGHBOURHOOD A FEW MONTHS AGO.
SO?
WELL, PEOPLE WERE SAYING THAT THEY COULD HAVE BEEN SAVED IF THEY HADN'T LOST SO MUCH BLOOD.
HM
WHEN SOUL AND BODY BODY SEPARATE, NO ONE EXCEPT GOD CAN UNDO IT.
BUT THEY SHOW IT IN THE MOVIES AS WELL. WHEN SOMEONE DIES IN AN ACCIDENT, DOCTORS ASK THEIR RELATIVES FOR THE BLOOD.
SATAN! YOU'RE DISGUSTING. STOP STARING AT THEM! I'M NOT WALKING WITH YOU.

HEY, WHAT'S WRONG?
YOU'RE DISGUSTING.
WHY? YOU KNOW WHEN DOGS GET THEIR TAILS ENTANGLED, THEY'RE PRETTY MUCH STILL.
WATCH YOUR MOUTH!
I MEAN, THIS IS THE BEST TIME TO THROW STONES AT THEM. DON'T BE MAD. I THOUGHT WE WERE FRIENDS.
THEY WERE MATING AND YOU ARE CHANNELESS.
MATING?
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
YOU DON'T KNOW?
KNOW WHAT?
YOU KNOW HOW A BRIDE AND A GROOM SLEEP TOGETHER AFTER MARRIAGE? THAT'S WRONG.
BUT THOSE DOGS WEREN'T SLEEPING. AND I SLEEP WITH MY BROTHERS AND PARENTS ALL THE TIME.
IS THIS MATING AS WELL?
ARGH! DON'T TELL ANYONE YOU HAD THIS CONVERSATION WITH ME.
WILL YOU TELL ME WHAT IT IS, THEN? I PROMISE I WON'T TELL ANYONE.

AFTER MARRIAGE, PSSHCRSSSS...
WHAT?
AFTER MARRIAGE, THE GROOM PUTS THIS IN THE BRIDE'S ASSY.
WHAT IN WHAT?
SHhhh!
ARE YOU SERIOUS? THAT'S DISGUSTING!
BUT THAT'S HOW IT IS. IT'S NECESSARY TO PRODUCE OFFSPRING, WHICH IS WHAT THOSE TOADS WERE DOING. DON'T TELL ANYONE.
THE GROOM PUTS HIS PENIS IN THE BRIDE'S ASS.
BUT A PENIS IS SO SOFT. HOW IS IT POSSIBLE?
THE OLDER YOU GET, THE HARDER IT BECOMES.
SEE YOU TOMORROW. DON'T TELL ANYONE.
DOGS ARE FILTHY, THEY LICK THEIR OWN VOMIT.
BUT YUMMY!
SHAME!
HEY! HUCK! HELL!
I'M NOT TALKING TO YOU.

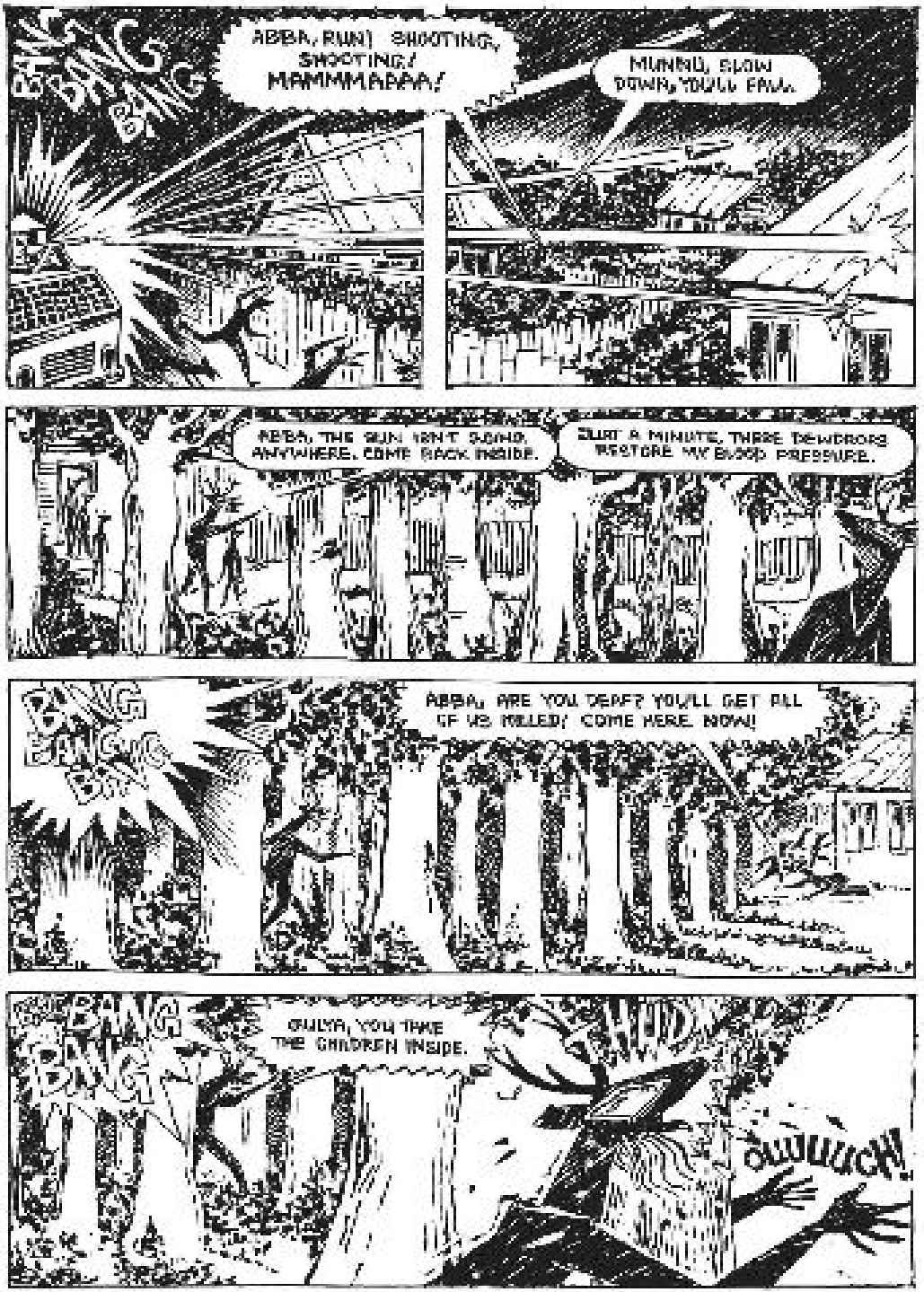
INK AND ORANGE


BATMARLOO WAS REDUCED TO A TINY ISLAND. WAMMA WANTED TO GO TOK YAOT BEFORE THE FLOOD WIPED AWAY THE REMAINDER OF BATMARLOO, TOO.
THE FLOOD HAD ERASED ALL THE ROADS TO THE AIRPORT. BALAL WANTED TO BUY A HELICOPTER TO MAKE IT POSSIBLE FOR WAMMA.


CHECK THIS OUT!
WOW! WHERE DID YOU GET THAT?
I MADE IT OUT OF CARD-BOARD.
YOU'LL FALL, YOU'LL FALL! GET DOWN!

MUNNA, DON'T WORRY. THIS HELICOPTER IS VERY LIGHT. THERE'S NO CREW, JUST TWO SEATS FOR THE PILOT AND A PASSENGER.
YOU'RE A REAL SCIENTIST, ANYTHING!
MAMMA WORE HER WHITE KASHMIR SHAWL EMBROIDERED WITH BROWN SILK THREAD AND SAT ON THE PASSENGER SEAT.
THERE WAS NO SPACE FOR MUNNA IN THE HELICOPTER. MAMMA CARRIED HIM ON HER LAP.
ANANTA PILOTED THE HELICOPTER AND THEY TOOK OFF.
THE AERIAL VIEW OF BATRAVALOO RESEMBLED A FADED BLACK AND WHITE PHOTO. EVERY COLOUR HAD TURNED GREY EXCEPT MAMMA'S LIPSTICK. SHE LOOKED BEAUTIFUL, WHICH DISTRACTED MUNNA FROM THE GLOOMY VIEW UNDERNEATH.

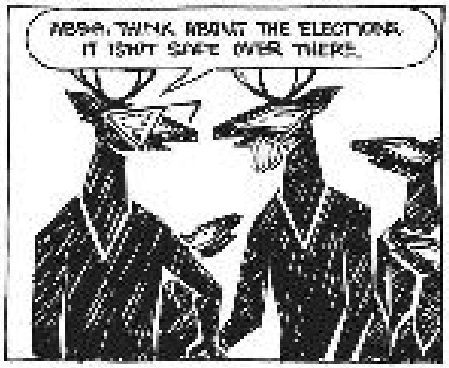
MUNNU, WAKE UP AND GET MILK FROM MALA BEFORE SHE WATERS IT DOWN.
HMM... GIVE ME A KISS FIRST.
MUNNU'S SCHOOL HAD SHUT DOWN AGAIN.
MAMMA WAS HAPPY THAT HER CHILDREN WERE HOME. THE ELECTION FOR THE NEXT GOVERNMENT OF KASHMIR WAS NEAR.
THE PANDITS—MAY GOD BLESS THEM WHEREVER THEY MAY—HAD RECLAIMED THEIR HOUSE IN BALGAMIEN. THE CRESCENT EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTE WAS NOW LOOKING FOR A NEW HOME FOR THE SCHOOL.
MUNNU, IS THAT YOU?
YES, ABBA.
WANT TO BRAIN A TIP? MY HAIR'S GETTING LONG AGAIN.
OF COURSE, ABBA. LET ME GET THE MILK FIRST.

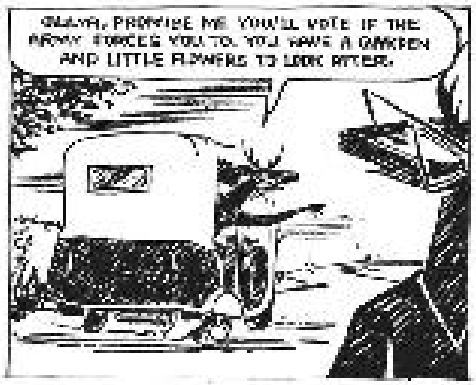

BANG BANG BANG
ABBA, RUN! SHOOTING, SHOOTING! MAMMMAAAA!
MUMMU, SLOW DOWN, YOU'LL FALL.
ABBA, THE GUN ISN'T SOUND ANYWHERE. COME BACK INSIDE.
JUST A MINUTE, THREE DEWDROPS RESTORE MY BLOOD PRESSURE.
BANG BANG BANG
ABBA, ARE YOU DEAF? YOU'LL GET ALL OF US KILLED! COME HERE NOW!
BANG BANG BANG
GULYA, YOU TAKE THE CHILDREN INSIDE.
WHO
GUUUUCH!

ABBA, GET UP AND RUN!
WHICH
NAUGHTY
ABBA, TURN RIGHT AND RUN; THEN TURN LEFT; RUN FAST NOW!
...TO GET RID OF THIS JUNGLE!
A THOUSAND TIMES I TOLD YOU...
CRASH
RUN, ABBA, RUN!
OWWW!

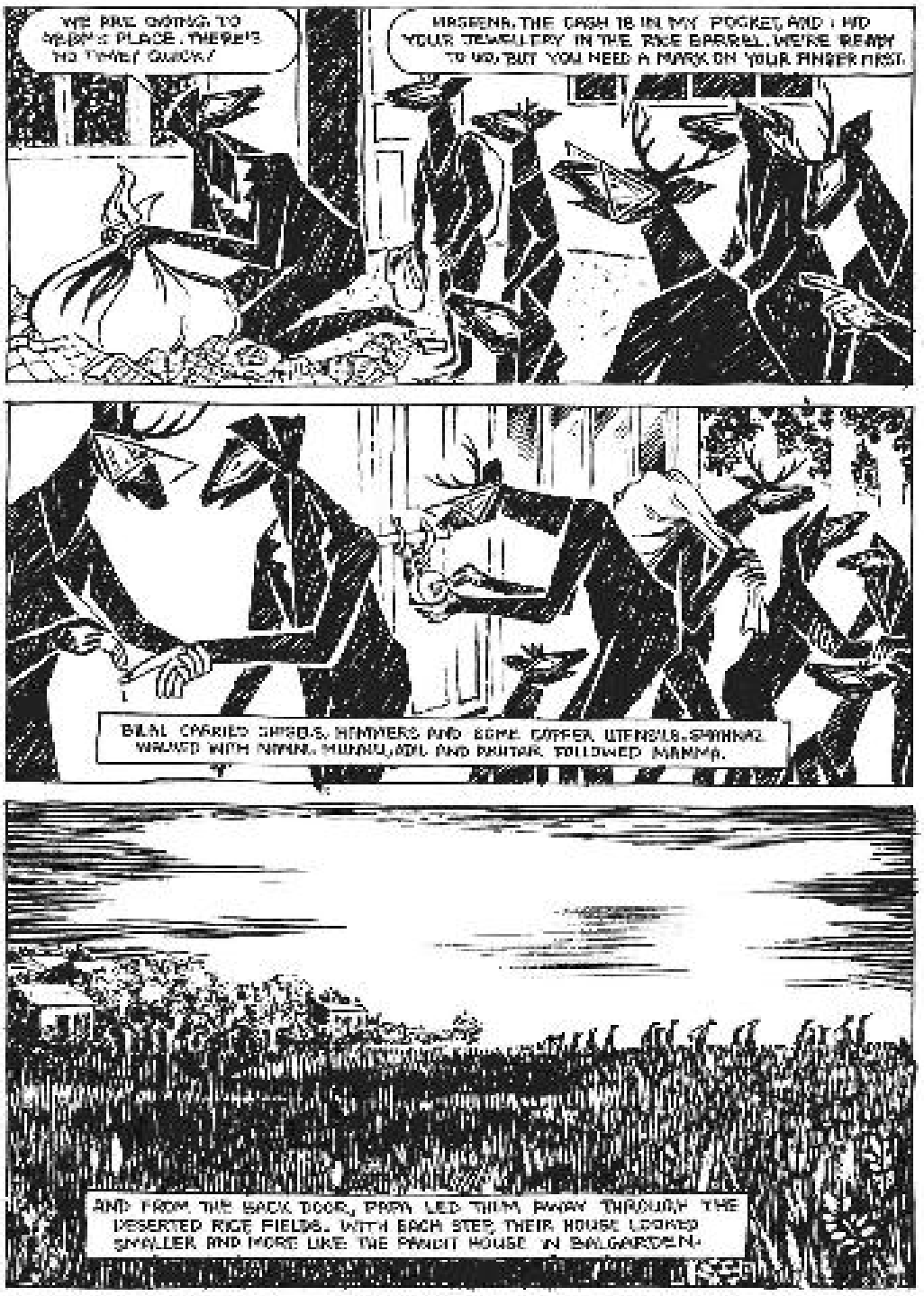
ABBA, YOU FUCKING BLIND BAT, YOU'LL GET ALL OF US KILLED! GET UP AND RUN!
BANG BANG BANG
NO, ABBA, LIE ON THE GROUND!
SWEETHEART, I CAN'T SEE. REMEMBER?
BILALOOO! WHERE ARE YOU GOING?
ABBA CRIED QUIETLY FOR THE REST OF THE DAY. HIS HEAD WAS BRUISED AND THERE WAS GRASS STUCK IN HIS BEARD. HE WAS BREATHING HEAVILY AS IF DROWNING.

BY THE EVENING, ABBA HAD MADE UP HIS MIND TO GO BACK TO HIS HOME IN ERBAN.





BLOODY CROOKS, HERE THEY TELL US THE ELECTIONS ARE FOR BETTER ROADS, WATER AND ELECTRICITY IN THE MIDDLE OF THIS WAR. AND THERE THEY TELL THE WORLD, 'LOOK, THE KASHMIRIS VOTED IN FAVOUR OF INDIA'.
STOP SMOKING, YOU ALMOST DIED LAST TIME.
ELECTION DAY.
GULYA, YOU PREPARE THE HAIR DYE WHILE I GET MILK. THERE MIGHT BE SOLDIERS OUTSIDE, SO I DON'T WANT TO SEND MUNNU OUT THERE.
GULYA, WAKE UP! NEED TO MARK YOU BEFORE THIS DRIES UP!
GULYA, MUTANTS HAVE BLOCKED THE STREET OUTSIDE.
REALLY?
THEY MIGHT LAUNCH AN AMBUSH ON THE ROAD. IT'S NOT GOING TO BE SAFE HERE. YOU WAKE UP THE KIDS. WE HAD BETTER LEAVE FOR BEGAM RIGHT NOW!
ABU, AKHTAR, MUNNU, WAKE UP NOW! GRAB YOUR SCHOOL BAGS. WE'VE GOT TO GO. HURRY UP!
WHERE?


WE ARE GOING TO MOSH'S PLACE. THERE'S NO TIME! QUICK!
HASEENA, THE CASH IS IN MY POCKET, AND I HID YOUR JEWELLERY IN THE RICE BARREL. WE'RE READY TO GO, BUT YOU NEED A MARK ON YOUR FINGER FIRST.
BILAL CARRIED SPADES, HAMMERS AND SOME COPPER UTENSILS. SHAHNAZ WALKED WITH NANNI, MUNNU, ADIL AND PANTAK. FOLLOWED MAMMA.
AND FROM THE BACK DOOR, PAPA LED THEM AWAY THROUGH THE DESERTED RICE FIELDS. WITH EACH STEP, THEIR HOUSE LOOKED SMALLER AND MORE LIKE THE PANDIT HOUSE IN BALGARDEN.

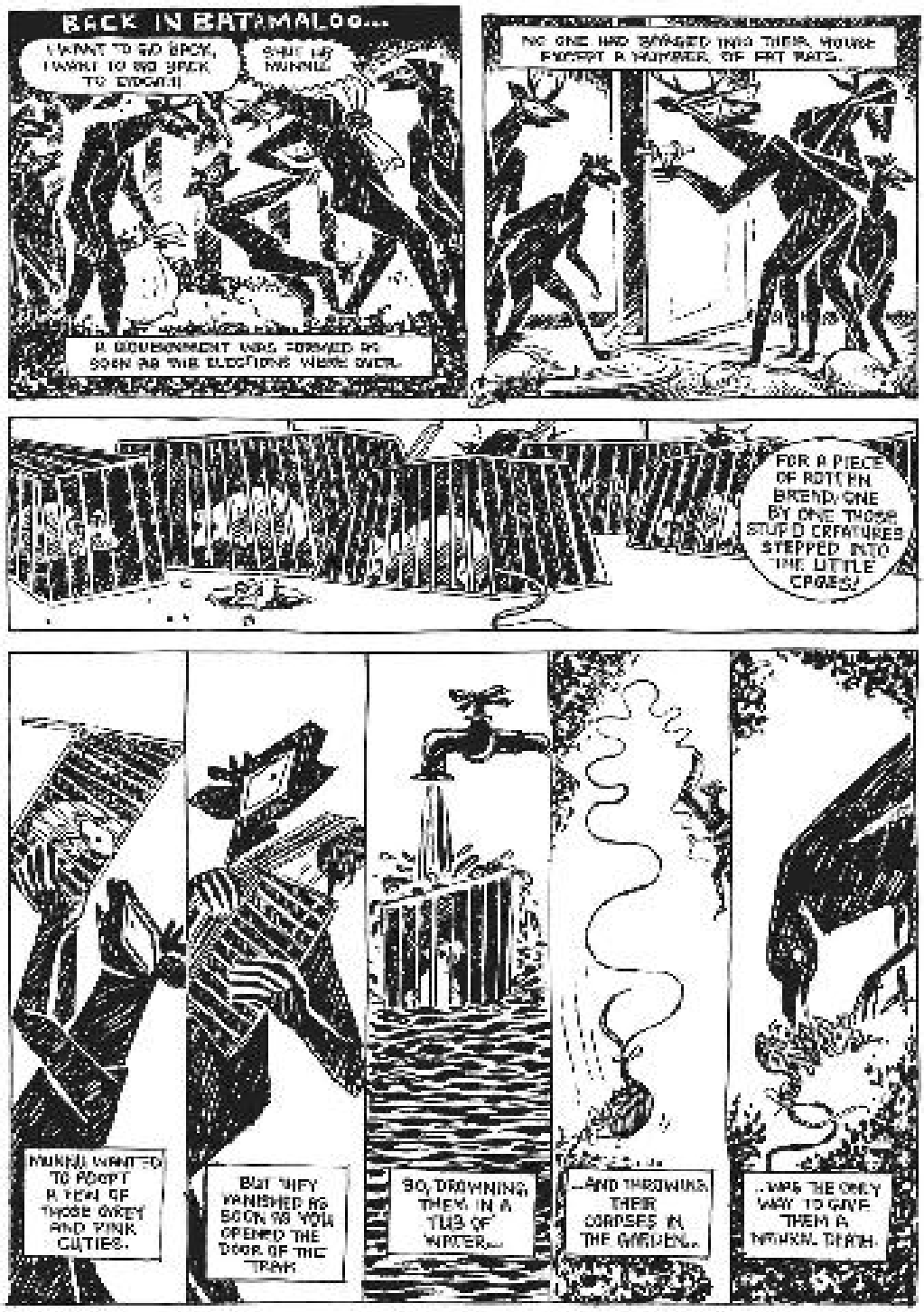
THE VAST RICE FIELDS, THE SKY AND THE BIRDS WERE CALM AND SEEMED UNAWARE OF THE ELECTIONS.
KIDS, SALT OR SWEET TEA?
GULYA, THIS IS YOUR HOUSE AND YOU SHOULD TAKE CARE OF IT.
IN EIDGAH, ABBA MADE BREAKFAST FOR THEM. WE DIDN'T NEED EYES IN HIS KITCHEN.
WHILE YOU'RE HERE, YOU SHOULD FIX THE BROKEN WINDOWS UPSTAIRS. SHAHANAZ AND I CAN REMOVE THE WEEDS FROM THE GARDEN. IT MUST LOOK LIKE AN ANCIENT CEMETERY.

AKHTAK FIXED THE BULLETS THAT ABBA NEVER USED.
MUNNU AND ADIL WERE ASSIGNED TO FILL UP THE CRACKS AND BULLET HOLES IN THE WALLS WITH CLAY.
THIS ONE'S DEEP. MUST BE A BIG BULLET INSIDE. GET THE CHISELS, WE'LL OPERATE ON IT.
MUNNU, DROP THOSE TOOLS RIGHT NOW! YOU'LL END UP TEARING DOWN THE WHOLE WALL, YOU IDIOTS!
I GUESS THE POOR WILL HAVE TO LIVE WITH THE BULLET AND DIE.

AS SOON AS THE LIGHTS WERE FILLED UP, THEY PLAYED HIDE AND SEEK WITH ROSA.
EVERY MINUTE IN EIDGAH WAS FUN.
ROSA HELPED TO SELL FIRE-WOOD BY THE GOVERNMENT RATION DEPOT NEAREST.
HE TOUCHED THE NEEDLE OF THE SCALE AND INTERPRETED THE PRICE.
HE WOULD BUY POTATO CHIPS AND COCA-COLA FOR THE KIDS AND TAKE THEM TO WATCH THE EVENING SPECTACLE IN EIDGAH SQUARE.

THERE, SOMEONE IN THE CROWD WOULD CLIMB THE TALL STRAFTLINE POLE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE GROUND—
AZADI! AZADI!
NO INDIA! NO PAKISTAN! WE WANT FREEDOM!
...THROW OFF HIS SHIRT AND WAVE A FLAG OF RED, GREEN AND WHITE IN THE SWARM OF PEOPLE...
...BEFORE RUSHING IT TO THE TIP OF THE POLE. PEOPLE SURGED, SHOUTED, SANG AND DANCED IN EXCITEMENT.
AFTER THE SPECTACLE, ABBA WOULD BUY APPA, AMMAR AND MUNNU MORE CHIPS AND COCONUT COOKIES. THEN THEY HEADED HOME FOR DINNER.
AFTER DINNER, NANNI GAVE ORANGE CANDIES TO THE CHILD WHO WENT TO BED FIRST.

SCHOOL


BACK IN BATAMALOO...
I WANT TO GO BACK, I WANT TO GO BACK TO BAGHDAD!
SHUT UP MUNNU!
A GOVERNMENT WAS FORMED AS SOON AS THE ELECTIONS WERE OVER.
NO ONE HAD BANGED INTO THEIR HOUSE EXCEPT A NUMBER OF FAT RATS.
FOR A PIECE OF ROTTEN BREAD, ONE BY ONE THOSE STUPID CREATURES STEPPED INTO THE LITTLE CRATES!
MUNNU WANTED TO ADOPT A TEAM OF THOSE GREY AND PINK CUTIES.
BUT THEY VANISHED AS SOON AS YOU OPENED THE DOOR OF THE TRAP.
SO, DROWNING THEM IN A TUB OF WATER...
...AND THROWING THEIR CORPSES IN THE GARDEN...
...WAS THE ONLY WAY TO GIVE THEM A NATURAL DEATH.

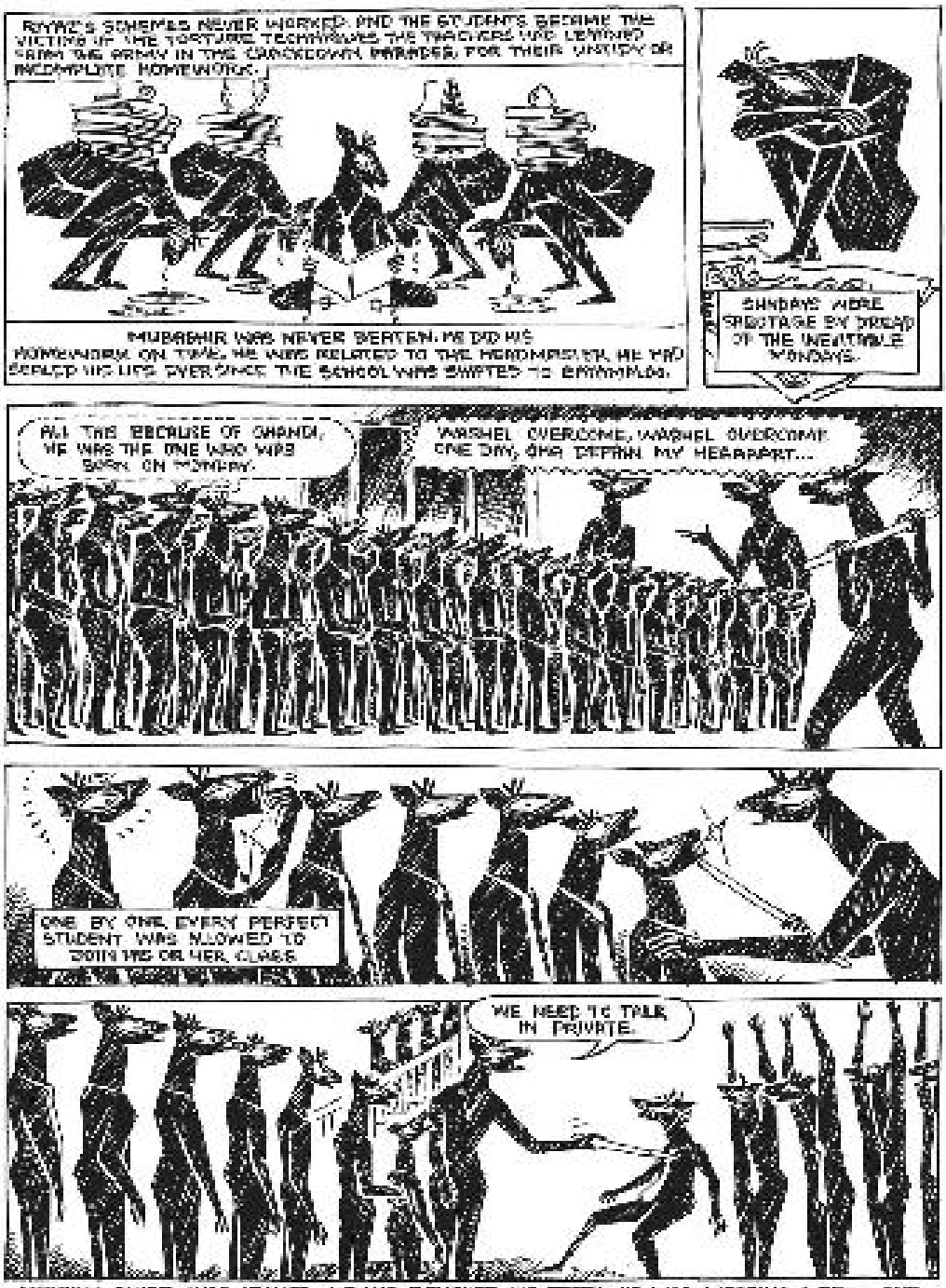
FILTHY MUNNI! PUT ON YOUR SCHOOL UNIFORM. YOUR SCHOOL HAS REOPENED.
OH GOD! AGAIN?
I SAW SOME OF YOUR SCHOOLMATES OUTSIDE... IS THAT A RAT YOU'VE TIED STRING TO? DISGUSTING!
I DON'T THINK WE SHOULD KILL THEM. WHY DON'T WE LEAVE THEM OUTSIDE BATAMBIDO?
THEY KNOW THEIR WAY BACK, BETTER THAN YOU DO. GET READY—ADIL WILL TAKE YOU TO SCHOOL.
FILTHY MUNNI, WASH YOUR HANDS. ADIL'S GETTING READY.
THE NEW SCHOOL BUILDING WAS JUST FIVE MINUTES' WALK AROUND THE CORNER.
TRUCKS AND LABOURERS MARKED THE ENTRANCE TO THE CRESCENT SCHOOL. IT WAS RIGHT ABOVE A FLOUR AND WALNUT STORE.

IT STANK OF ROTTEN FLOUR AND FISH.
THE WALLS OF THE CLASSROOMS WERE COVERED WITH INDIAN NEWSPAPERS DEPICTING PICTURES OF SLEEPY-LOOKING, HALF-NAKED BOURWOOD LADIES.
MOVE, MOVE, QUICK! WE'RE RUNNING LATE FOR THE MORNING ASSEMBLY.
AND ALL THE NEW TEACHERS HAD DWARF EYEBROWS LIKE THE CALLIGRAPHY ON A WHITE EPITAPH.
WASHEL OVERCOME, WASHEL OVERCOME ONE DAY, OHA DEPPIN MY HEART...
THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS AND TEACHERS HAD DROPPED TO SUCH AN EXTENT THAT THE MORNING ASSEMBLY WAS HELD IN ONE CLASSROOM.

IF YOUR APPEARANCE VIOLATED THE CODE OF CONDUCT HERE, YOU WERE TAKEN ASIDE. THE REST WERE ALLOWED TO JOIN THE CLASS.
TEETH?
BRUSHED.
SHOES?
POLISHED.

SHIRT?
CLEAN AND IRONED.
SOMETIMES THE KIDS WORE THEIR SHIRTS INSIDE OUT AND BRUSHED THEIR TEETH WITH THEIR TIES.

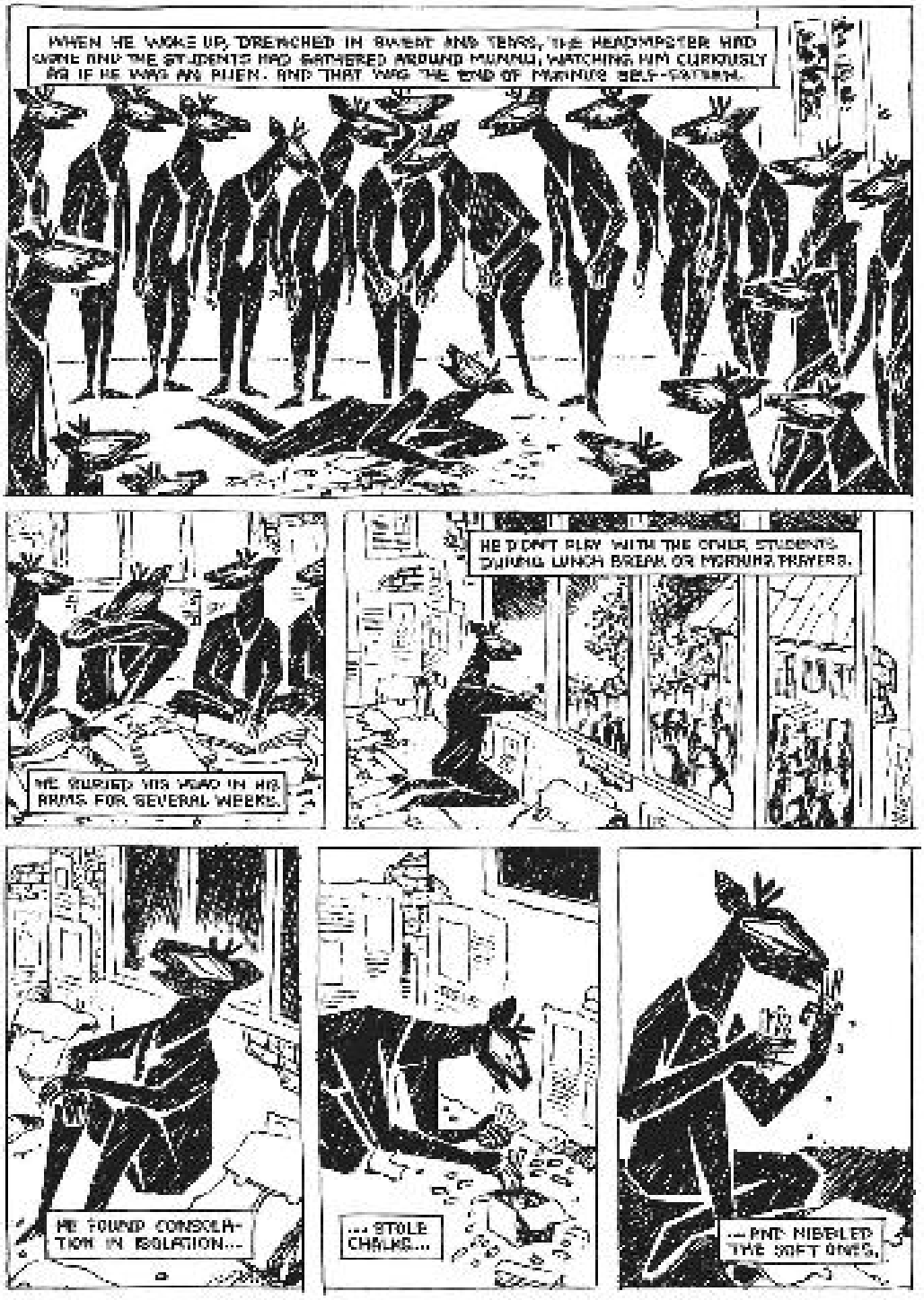
YOU'RE GOING TO THANK ME LATER, MONKEY ARSE! YOU'LL SEE, THE MORONS WILL FALL ASLEEP ONCE THEY SIT ON THIS DUST.
RIYAZ WOULD BRING DUST FROM CEMETERIES AND SPRINKLE IT ON THE TEACHER'S CHAIR BEFORE CLASSES STARTED.


ROYAL'S SCHEMES NEVER WORKED. AND THE STUDENTS BECAME THE VICTIMS OF THE TORTURE TECHNIQUES THE TEACHERS HAD LEARNED FROM THE ARMY IN THE CRACKDOWN PARADES FOR THEIR UNTIDY OR INCOMPLETE HOMEWORK.
MUBASHIR WAS NEVER BEATEN. HE DID HIS HOMEWORK ON TIME. HE WAS RELATED TO THE HEADMASTER. HE HAD SEALED HIS LIPS EVER SINCE THE SCHOOL WAS SWITCHED TO ENGLISH.
SUNDAYS WERE SABOTAGE BY DREAD OF THE INEVITABLE MONDAYS.
ALL THIS BECAUSE OF GHANDI. HE WAS THE ONE WHO WAS BORN ON MONDAY.
WASHEL OVERCOME, WASHEL OVERCOME ONE DAY, GHA DEFAN MY HEARRAPPT...
ONE BY ONE, EVERY PERFECT STUDENT WAS ALLOWED TO JOIN HIS OR HER CLASS.
WE NEED TO TALK IN PRIVATE.
MUNNA'S SHIRT WAS IRONED. HE HAD BRUSHED HIS TEETH. HE WAS WEARING A BELT AND BADGE AS WELL-- ONLY GOD KNOWS WHAT MUNNA DID TO PROVOKE THE HEADMASTER, BUT HE WAS TAKEN ASIDE AFTER THE MORNING PRAYERS.

ONE BY ONE, EVERY NOT-SO-PERFECT STUDENT WAS PUNISHED AND THEN FORGIVEN.
UNTIL ONLY A CONFUSED MUNNU AND THE HEADMASTER WERE LEFT IN THE ASSEMBLY ROOM.
NICE HAIRCUT.
WHEN THE FIRST SLAP LANDED ON HIS CHEEK AND SET OFF A FIRE ALARM IN HIS EARS, IT SUMMONED A FLASHBACK OF SUNDAY.
ON SUNDAY, MUNNU HAD INSISTED THAT THE BARBER GIVE HIM A HAIRCUT SIMILAR TO THE ONE THAT THE BLONDE BOY NEXT TO MICHAEL JACKSON ON THE POSTER HAD.
YOU KNOW WHAT THIS HAIRCUT MEANS?
THAT YOU ARE A BABY PIG.
THEN THE HEADMASTER CAREFULLY REMOVED HIS CASIO WRISTWATCH.

AND THE SAPS RESUMED.
SIR, PLEASE, LET ME GO. I'LL GET A ZERO-DEGREE HAIRCUT TOMORROW!
THIS ONE IS FOR TALKING TO YOUR TEACHER IN KASHMIR!
* IN KASHMIR.
MARK MY WORDS, YOU'LL BECOME A MASON!
OR A PLUMBER!
MAYBE A CARPENTER!
AS IF GOD HEARD MUNNU'S SCREAMS, THE HEADMASTER'S HAND SUFFERED A MUSCLE SPASM.
BUT HE CLENCHED AND STRETCHED IT SEVERAL TIMES...
...AND THEN HE RESUMED HIS DUTY AGAIN.
TEARS TASTED LIKE COLD SALT TEA.

WHEN MUNNU COULD NOT FEEL ANY MORE PAIN AND FELL ON THE FLOOR, THE HEADMASTER LEFT THE ROOM.
HE RETURNED WITH A PAIR OF SCISSORS.
MUNNU COVERED HIS HAIR WITH HIS HANDS...
... BUT HIS RELUCTANCE ONLY EARNED HIM MORE KICKS AND PUNCHES.
IT TOOK LESS THAN A MINUTE FOR THE HEADMASTER TO TRIM THE HAIR THAT MUNNU HAD SPENT WEEKS GROWING.
MUNNU THREW UP WITH PAIN AND SHOCK AND THEN PASSED OUT.


WHEN HE WOKE UP, DRENCHED IN SWEAT AND TEARS, THE HEADMASTER HAD GONE AND THE STUDENTS HAD GATHERED AROUND MUMMU, WATCHING HIM CURIOUSLY AS IF HE WAS AN ALIEN. AND THAT WAS THE END OF MUMMU'S SELF-PITY.
HE BURIED HIS HEAD IN HIS ARMS FOR SEVERAL WEEKS.
HE DIDN'T PLAY WITH THE OTHER STUDENTS DURING LUNCH BREAK OR MORNING PRAYERS.
HE FOUND CONSOLATION IN ISOLATION...
...STOLE CHALKS...
...AND NIBBLED THE SOFT ONES.

AS TIME PASSED, HE DEVELOPED A FONDNESS FOR THE SHAPES LEFT ON THE CHALKS BY HIS SMALL BITES.
AND EVENTUALLY MUNNU REQUIRED TO REFINE THOSE SHAPES WITH THE PIN OF HIS BROOCH.
CARVING CHALKS WAS LIKE MEDITATION, HE WAS LIKE A FISH IN WATER.
MAKING TINY REPLICAS OF KASHMIRI SHRINES WAS EASIER THAN SCULPTING A HUMAN FIGURE...
...EXCEPT THE STATUE OF BUDDHA, WHO WAS FAT AND LACKED INTRICACY IN HIS ANATOMY.
SON, CAN I KEEP THIS?
I'M STILL WORKING ON IT.
THE TEACHERS WERE IMPRESSED AND SOUNDED CUNNINGLY ORIGINAL.
DON'T TOUCH IT!
AND THE FRIENDLINESS OF THE OTHER STUDENTS WAS DISTRACTING.
MUHAMMAD FOUND PEACE WITH THIS CRAFT AS WELL. HE PARTICULARLY LOVED MAKING CHALK BULLETS.
SIGHA YOUR HAWK HAS GROWN NOW. THERE IS NO REASON FOR YOU TO BE SAD.
CARVING CHALKS KEPT A BOND BETWEEN THEM.

YOU WANT SOME CHOCOLATES?
DROP THEM IN MY POCKET.
MUSHASHI, YOU TRAVEL ABOUT 6 KILOMETERS TO GET HERE, TO THIS SHITHOLE. WHY DON'T YOU JOIN ANOTHER SCHOOL SOMEWHERE NEAR BY?
THE HEADMASTER HERE IS LIKE MY GODFATHER.
THEN WHY ARE YOU SO COLD NOW? YOU WERE SO JOLLY IN BALGARDEN.
I HATE LIFE. BUT YOU SHOULD BE HAPPY. YOUR HAIR HAS FULLY GROWN.
BUT IT'S STILL EMBARRASSING. YOUR GODFATHER SHAVED MY HEAD. PLUS I SURVIVE WITH HERE.
SORRY TO SAY, BUT IF THE ARMY KILLS OUR HEADMASTER I'M GOING TO PISS ON HIS GRAVE.
BAZAR!
DON'T SAY SUCH AWFUL THINGS! I FEEL LIKE DYING!
TRUST ME, HE DESERVES IT.
YOU DON'T KNOW A THING ABOUT DEATH! THERE'S NO DIFFERENCE BETWEEN YOU AND THOSE BLIND SERIAL KILLERS.
FINE, MAY OUR HEADMASTER DIE A NATURAL DEATH. HAPPY?
TH-THEY KILLED MY FATHER. THEY KILLED MY FATHER!
OH NO, FORGIVE ME, I DIDN'T KNOW. SORRY, SORRY, SORRY. FORGIVE ME. MUSHASHI, PLEASE.

MY FATHER, IS A MARTYR.
HOW DID THAT HAPPEN?
REMEMBER I WAS ABSENT FOR A FEW WEEKS IN BRIGADEN?
THAT AWFUL DAY, ME AND MY SISTER WERE HAVING TEA AFTER RETURNING FROM SCHOOL.
"THE POLICE KNOCKED ON OUR DOOR AND WE THOUGHT IT WAS A RANDOM HOUSE CHECK."
BUT THEY...
"THEY HAD PARKED A POLICE AMBULANCE OUTSIDE."
"THEY PULLED A CORPSE FROM IT."
"IT WAS MY FATHER, DRENCHED IN BLOOD, LYING ON THE STRETCHER."
THAT DAY WAS LIKE A NIGHTMARE. I COULDN'T KEEP MY EYES ON HIM. HIS BODY HAD BEEN CUT WITH RAZORS. I WISH I'D SEEN HIM FOR LONGER. TROUGH- I MISS MY PAPA.

"THE ARMY HAD TAKEN HIM FOR QUESTIONING THAT DAY BEFORE HE REACHED HIS OFFICE."
"I COULDN'T BELIEVE MY FATHER WAS DEAD. HIS FACE WAS GLOWING, BUT YELLOW!"
I SCREAMED AND SCREAMED. AND GUESS WHAT? HE OPENED HIS EYES FOR ME!
"THE WATER, TURNED RED FROM THE BLOOD OF HIS LEAKING WOUNDS WHEN WE WASHED HIM."
SO HE WASN'T DEAD?
THAT'S WHAT I THOUGHT. BUT THE GRAVEDIGGER SAID DEAD BODIES REACT THAT WAY TO WARM WATER.
"HE SHUT HIS EYES, AND NEVER OPENED THEM AGAIN."
YOUR FATHER IS A MARTYR.
YOU SHOULDN'T BE CRYING WHEN HE'S ENJOYING HIMSELF IN PARADISE.
EVERYONE TRIED TO CONSOLE MUBASHIR.

STOP WEEPING. YOU KNOW WILN, OUR MONITOR IN BALGARDEN, IS DRIVING RICKSHAW NOW? WELL, HE'S OUR HEADMASTER TO MAKE YOU OUR MONITOR.
YOU WANT TO WATCH A MOVIE? I'VE GOT PLENTY OF THEM!
SHUT UP SHAHID!
YOU KNOW, MY BROTHER WAS A FREEDOM FIGHTER. ONE DAY, HE LEFT HIS GUN AT HOME.
"MY SISTER AND I WANTED TO SEE HOW IT WORKED. SO WE QUIETLY TIPTOED IT TO OUR ROOM. IT WAS SO HEAVY. WE PLACED IT ON OUR WINDOW-"
"I DON'T KNOW HOW IT HAPPENED, BUT SUDDENLY THE NEIGHBOURS THOUGHT IT WAS A TYPE FUNCTIONE. I HAVE NO IDEA WHERE THE BULLET WENT."
DO YOU STILL HAVE THE GUN?
NO. THAT GUN WAS BURIED WITH HIS BODY A FEW WEEKS LATER.
YOUR BROTHER AS WELL? DAMN IT. HOW DARE THEY? LET'S TEACH THESE COWARDLY INDIAN BASTARDS A LESSON. AN EMPTY ALCOHOL BOTTLE IS ALL WE NEED...

KYRE DID MAKE A PETROL BOMB, BUT ONLY TO BLOW UP THE SCHOOL AFTER HE DECIDED TO PUT AN END TO HIS MORNING PUNISHMENTS.

UNFORTUNATELY, THE BOMB HIT THE TIN ROOF TOP OF THE SCHOOL AND THE PETROL BURNED IN A BLINK, SCORING THE PAVEMENT AWAY.
MURACHKI?
BOMB?
BURNED?
POOR...?
TOWN?
PRESENT.
PRESENT.
PRESENT.
PRESENT.
PRESENT.
AND, AS USUAL, THE SCHOOL REMAINED OPEN.
I'M HUNGRY. ANYONE LISTENING?
BUYER, WHO LOCKED IN THE ASSEMBLY ROOM EVERY DAY FROM MORNING TO EVENING FOR A COUPLE OF WEEKS.
MEANWHILE, EVERYONE GREW FOND OF MURACHKI, IN THE CLASS, NOT ONLY BECAUSE OF HIS SAD STORY BUT BECAUSE HE SHOWED SOMETHING: HIS HIDDEN TALENT.
BRILLIANT! TRAGICALLY WITH YOUR FATHER, HIS DRUG...?
NO, MRDAK-! HE WAS AN ENGINEER.
AND THE TEACHERS DECORATED THE CLASS-ROOM WITH HIS ARTWORK.
NO, IT'S NOT A COLOUR PALETTE. I TRIED TO MAKE A BUTTERFLY WITH ALL THE COLOURS. DAD GAVE ME ON MY BIRTHDAY.

HE COPIED PICTURES FROM PAPA'S WEDDING ALBUM, BOOKS AND NEWSPAPERS.

BUT HIS SKETCHES SUMMERED FROM DEFORMITIES.
SHE LOOKS LIKE A COCONUT. COME AND HAVE DINNER.
THAT'S BECAUSE YOU DON'T GIVE ME PROPER COLOURS!
MUNNU ERASED HIS LINES AGAIN AND AGAIN, UNTIL IT TORE HOLES IN THE PAPER.
DRAWING BECAME HIS OBSESSION.
PERHAPS THE REFERENCE PICTURES WERE NOT CLEAR ENOUGH.
ONE MORNING A VAST PORTION OF THE FRONT PAGE OF THE NEWSPAPER WAS ADORNED WITH A PICTURE OF A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN. HER SHY VIVID EYES AND THE RELUCTANT SMILE RECALLED THE BEAUTIFUL GIRLS IN DAMPSGAH.

BY TOUCHING HER PICTURE, HE COULD ALMOST FEEL THE TEXTURE OF HER LIPS.
THAT DAY, MUNRO'S HAND GLIDED ON THE DRAWING PAPER AND THERE WAS NO NEED FOR AN ERASER.
EVERYBODY, CHECK THIS OUT. I DID IT!
EXCELLENT. NOW TOCK ON YOUR STUDIES.
CAN I USE IT TO COVER MY NOTEBOOK?
FIRST CLASS! ONCE I GET A JOB, I'LL BUY A COLOUR BOX FOR YOU.
THANKS, BILL!
NOW SIGN IT, BUT DON'T WRITE HER NAME ON IT. IT'S OBVIOUS THAT SHE'S PRINCESS DIANA.
IT WASN'T ABOUT DRAWING EXACTLY THE SAME EYES, NOSE AND LIPS — BUT THE OVERALL COMPOSITION HAD TO CAPTURE THE FACIAL EXPRESSION.

BACK IN SCHOOL...
WOW! WILL YOU DRAW MY FAMOUS SKETCH?
WOULD YOU DRAW MEEON YOU, ME?
MAN OH, PLEASE DON'T WRITE ON IT.
...MUNNIE WAS FAMOUS PORN.
BE A SYMBOL OF CHARACTER AND KNOWLEDGE
FOR THE ANNUAL FUNCTION PREPARATIONS, HE WAS ASSIGNED THE SPECIAL TASK OF WRITING THE INSCRIPTIONS ON THE BLACKBOARDS IN EVERY CLASS...
...WHILE THE OTHER STUDENTS REMOVED THE NEWSPAPERS BEHIND THE PICTURES OF SLEEPY-LOOKING BOLLYWOOD STARS FROM THE WALLS, WHICH BETRAYED THE CLOBBERING AND BULLET HOLES UNDERNEATH.
COME TO LEARN LEAVE TO SERVE
COME TO LEARN! THIS IS HOW MARRIAGE IS CONSUMMATED!

A SHOE AND
A NYLON RAG

LOOK AT YOUR NOTEBOOK. THERE'S NOTHING BUT POETRY!
IF YOU WANTED TO BECOME A POET LIKE GHALIB, THEN WHY DID YOU WASTE MY MONEY ON ENGINEERING?
IF POETRY IS YOUR PASSION...
SCHOOLS WERE CLOSED FOR THE WINTER BREAK. IT WAS JANUARY, THE SEASON OF EXAM RESULTS. BILAL AND FAROOQ WAS 12TH-GRADE EXAMS.
...YOU CAN SPEND THE REST OF YOUR LIFE HERE. I WAS STUPID TO SEE AN ENGINEER IN YOU.
SO PAPA OPENED A COPPER SHOP FOR HIM, HEEEEEY.
MALIK COPPER STORE
ITEMS IN FANCY GOLD ITEMS AND COPPER UTENSILS.
FORTUNATELY, BILAL'S SHOP WAS A SUCCESS.

PAPA ENGRAVED COPPER UTENSILS AND BALAL SOLD THEM AT HIS SHOP.
IT WAS A SUCCESS STORY.
IN FACT, THE PATROLLING ARMY ALSO STOPPED BY OCCASIONALLY TO PICK UP GIFTS FOR THEIR FAMILIES IN INDIA.
YOU KNOW, PAPA WAS SAYING THAT HE'LL OPEN A BRONZE SHOP FOR ME IF I FAIL.
YOU THINK I'LL LET THAT HAPPEN? YOU'RE GOING TO BECOME AN ARTIST, CASP. YOUR EYES, I HAVE A SURPRISE FOR YOU!

HERE.
MY GOD!
THIS IS ALL FOR YOU.
BULAL FULFILLED HIS PROMISE AND BOUGHT MUNNU BOXES OF SOFT COLOURED PENCILS.
I LOVE YOU SO MUCH!
LUNCH IS READY AND MAMMAS WAITING FOR YOU.
IF ANY CUSTOMERS DROP BY TELL THEM I'LL BE BACK AFTER LUNCH. & THEY'RE IN A HURRY, CALL ME!
MUNNU, I DON'T KNOW HOW TO SELL. HE'LL BE BACK SOON.
MUNNU LOOKED AFTER THE SHOP WHILE BULAL HAD LUNCH AT HOME.
BULAL, DID THE ARMY VISIT YOUR SHOP PAYING?
STOP TEASING ME! THEY JUST BUY GIFTS FOR THEIR FAMILIES. THEY DON'T EVEN ASK FOR MY IDENTITY CARD.

YOU SHOULD TELL THEM YOU DON'T HAVE WHAT THEY'RE LOOKING FOR!
YEAH RIGHT. WHY DON'T YOU RUN THE SHOP AND I'LL COOK DINNER FOR YOU!
I TRIED THAT FORMULA LAST TIME WHEN THEY WERE ASKING FOR AN ASHOKA LION ENGRAVED ON A PLATE.
I TOLD THEM THAT WE'RE A RETAILER SHOP AND DON'T MANUFACTURE COPPER ITEMS OURSELVES.
BUT THEY JUST CHOSE OVER ITEMS FROM THE SHELVES. WHAT CAN I DO?
YOU CAN RELAX FOR A FEW MINUTES.
NAH, MAMMU MUST BE BORED BY NOW. I'LL SEE YOU LATER.
OH ALMIGHTY, MAY THE ARMY LOSE THEIR WAY AND PROTECT BILAL AND EVERY OTHER MUSLIM FROM INDIA.
MAMMU PRAYED FOR BILAL SEVERAL TIMES A DAY.

IN FACT, SHE VISITED PEEK SAWS TO SEEK DIVINE INTERVENTION.
BURY THE TALISMAN WITH A SIGH, KEEP THE ARMY IN MIND AND THEN COVER IT WITH A NYLON RAG.
HANG IT FROM THE CEILING OF THE SHOP AND THE ARMY WOULDN'T EVEN NOTICE THE PLACE.
HEY KIDDO, WHERE'S THE OWNER OF THIS SHOP?
THE TALISMAN WORKED - THE ARMY CHANGED THEIR PATROLLING ROUTE.
HE'S SICK.
THEY VISITED MUNUK COPPER STORE WHEN INURI WAS AWAY FOR LUNCH.
SORRY, SIR. MY BROTHER WILL BE BACK IN THE EVENING.
A DAY AFTER, THEY VISITED INURI.
HOW OLD ARE YOU?
AROUND 10.
AND AGAIN THE NEXT DAY.
WHAT'S YOUR NAME?

WHERE DO YOU LIVE?
NEAR BY.
FOR SOME REASON, THEY STAYED LONGER EACH DAY, WHILE MUNNU TRIFLED WITH THE CALCULATOR.
WHEN IS YOUR BROTHER COMING?
LATER.
THEY CAME AGAIN AS USUAL.
YOU DON'T MIND US COMING HERE, DO YOU?
NO, SIR...
HANDSHAKE, THEN?
THE OFFICER GRIPPED MUNNU'S HAND TIGHT...
...AND PULLED IT TOWARDS HIS BELT.

MUMMA TRIED TO PULL HIS HAND BACK, BUT DIDN'T CHANGE THE OFFICER'S GRIP OR FACE.
THE OFFICER'S GRIP ONLY GOT TIGHTER AND TIGHTER, WITH EVERY PASSING MINUTE.
THE BINDING OF HIS CRUTCH BECAME VISIBLE AS HE RUBBED MUMMA'S HAND AGAINST IT.
FEAR, SHAME AND A CHAIN OF THOUGHTS FROZE MUMMA IN PLACE.

IS YOUR BROTHER BACK YET?
FINALLY A LADY PEEPED INTO THE SHOP AND THE PROW OFFICER DROPPED MUNNUR'S HAND.
PLEASE WAIT HERE, I'LL CALL HIM.
MUNNU LEFT THE SHOP UNATTENDED AND RAN AWAY.
BUDDI, THERE ARE SOME CUSTOMERS AT THE SHOP!
MUNNU COULDN'T MAKE SENSE OF WHAT HAD HAPPENED. HE FELT UNCLEAN AND GRIPPED WITH UNIDENTIFIED GUILT.
HE HID IN THE ATTIC AND CARVED HUMAN FACES ON HIS ARMS.

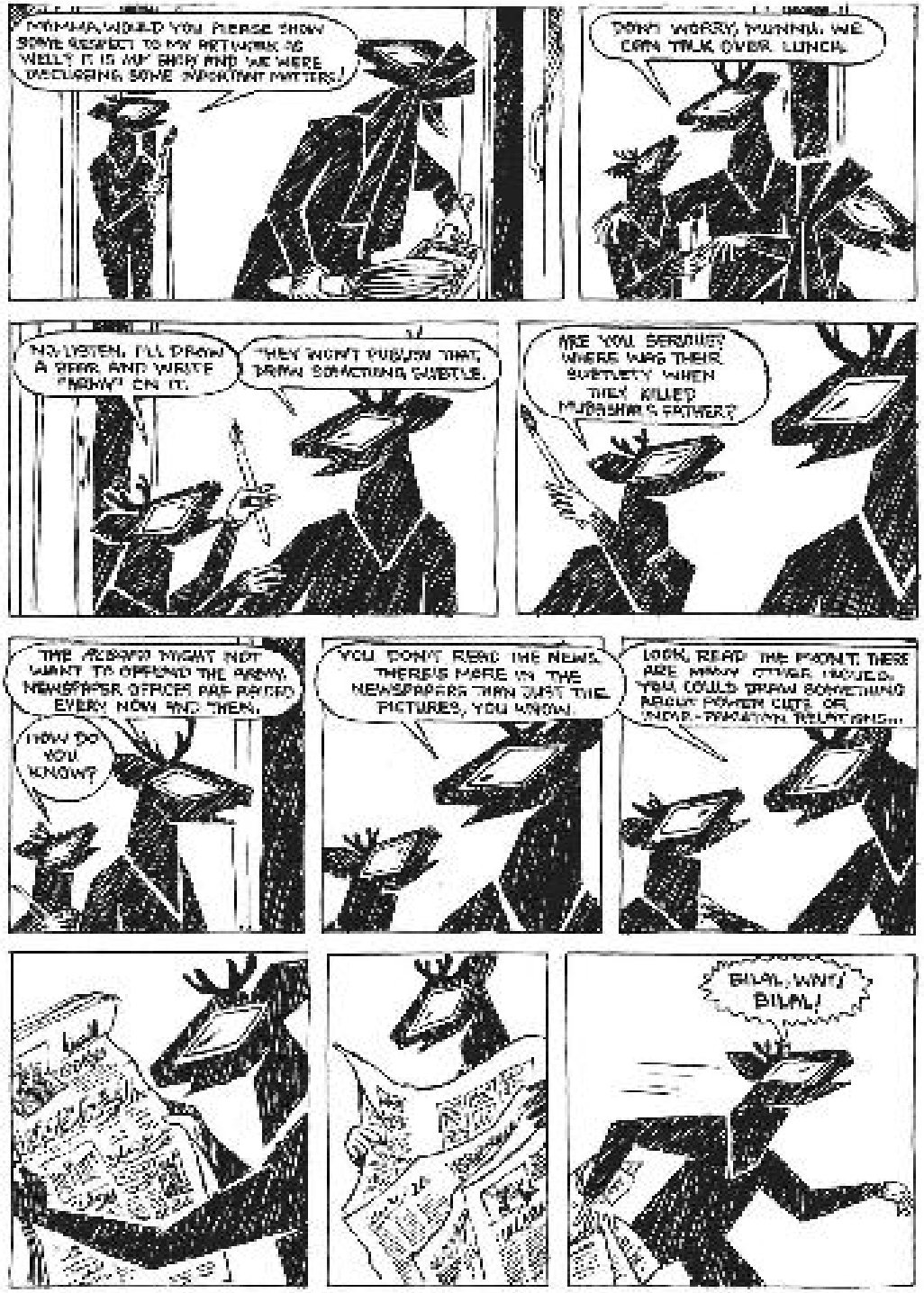
INSIDE OUT

AT LEAST OPEN YOUR BOOKS, MUNNY!. ONE DAY YOUR BROTHERS WILL BECOME DOCTORS AND YOU'LL BE SELLING CALENDARS!
THE WORLD HAD ENTERED A NEW MILLENNIUM, BUT MUNNY NEVER REMEMBERED MUCH ABOUT THE YEARS 1999 AND 2000.
PERHAPS BECAUSE HE HAD THE SAME ROUTINE EVERY DAY.
AND THINGS HAD NOT CHANGED MUCH IN SCHOOL, EITHER.
MOST OF MUNNY'S CLASSMATES BUNKED SCHOOL OR FEIGNED ILLNESS TO AVOID THE TEACHERS' BEATINGS.
GIRLS GAVE CHOCOLATES AND BONBONS TO THE TEACHERS TO KEEP THEM IN GOOD HUMOUR.
AND RYPT, PADDED HIS BODY WITH SEVERAL BOOKS BEFORE THE MORNING ASSEMBLY TO SHIELD HIMSELF FROM PUNISHMENTS.

IN THE 9TH GRADE, WHEN THEIR CLASSROOM WAS PRIOR THE TEACHERS' OFFICE, RIVAZ DUG SMALL HOLES ON THE FLOOR TO POUR DIRT OVER THE TEACHERS.
HE CALLED IT THE KARGIL WAR.
THE REAL KARGIL WAR TOOK PLACE BETWEEN INDIA AND PAKISTAN IN KASHMIR IN 1999. BOTH COUNTRIES THREATENED EACH OTHER WITH ATOM BOMBS. THE WAR ENDED WHEN BILL CLINTON SORTED THINGS OUT.
KASHMIR AND MUMBAI BECAME CLOSE FRIENDS AND CARRIED CHAIRS TOGETHER.
WE SHOULD DIP THE WORLD TRADE CENTER TOWERS IN GLUE SO THEY DON'T BREAK.
AN OLD REPORT CARD SAYS THAT MUNNU PASSED THE 8TH GRADE IN 2000 AND THEN JOINED THE PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL.
PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL
THE NEW SCHOOL WAS QUITE FAR, FANCY.

WUNNU'S NEW CLASSMATES WERE OLDER THAN HIM.
NOPE. YOU HAVE TO DRAW HER NAKED OR WELL, BREAK OUR CRICKET BATS ON YOUR BUTT.
EVEN THE TEACHERS WERE AFRAID OF THEM.
AFTER UNCOVERING HER NUDE SKETCH, HIS TEACHER DRAGGED HIM TO THE PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE.
DON'T OPEN YOUR MOUTH. REMEMBER THE CRICKET BATS!
HOWEVER, THE PRINCIPAL WAS IMPRESSED WITH WUNNU'S DRAWING SKILLS.
AND INSTEAD OF PUNISHMENT, HE ASKED HIM TO PAINT THE PORTRAITS OF FAMOUS POETS, WRITERS AND EDUCATIONISTS ON THE WALLS OF THE SCHOOL.
HE ALSO GOT HIM TO RETOUCH AND COPY THE DECAYING PAINTINGS FROM HIS COLLECTION ONTO FRESH CANVASES.

MUNNIQ, YOU ARE GETTING REALLY GOOD AT PAINTING. WHY DON'T YOU GET THIS PHOTOGRAPHED? WE'LL GET IT PUBLISHED!
PUBLISHED?
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
WE'LL SUBMIT IT TO THE DAILY DAILY ALASKA AND THEY CAN CARRY IT IN THEIR SUNDAY CHILDREN'S EDITION.
YOU MEAN MY PAINTINGS LOOK CHILDISH?
NOT AT ALL - I JUST MEAN THAT PEOPLE CAN SEE YOUR ART IF IT'S PUBLISHED.
BUT THESE PAINTINGS AREN'T MINE I'M JUST COPYING THEM FROM THE OLD ONES.
YOU CAN PRINT IS WHAT MATTERS. CHECK OUT THE OTHER CHILDREN'S DRAWINGS IN THE PAPER - YOUR PAINTINGS ARE MUCH BETTER.
HOW ABOUT DRAWING SOMETHING LIKE THIS ONE?
YOU HAVE TO BE QUITE WELL PAID FOR THAT. IT'S CALLED AN EDITORIAL CARTOON.
YOU HAVE TO TELL A STORY THROUGH A FEW STROKES OF THE BRUSH.
YOU'RE EXAGGERATING. ALL THIS CARTOONIST DRAWS IS KASHMIRI SKULLS, CAGES AND THE ARMY.
BUURA, IT'S ALMOST AFTERNOON AND YOUR SHOP IS STILL CLOSED. DON'T GET INTO THE HABIT OF MAKING YOUR CUSTOMERS WAIT. YOU'LL LOSE THEM!


MMMHA WOULD YOU PLEASE SHOW SOME RESPECT TO MY ARTWORK SO WELL? IT IS MY SHIRT AND WE WERE DISCUSSING SOME IMPORTANT MATTERS!
DON'T WORRY, MUNNA. WE CAN TALK OVER LUNCH.
NO, LISTEN. I'LL DRAW A BEAR AND WRITE "ARMY" ON IT.
THEY WON'T PUBLISH THAT. DRAW SOMETHING SUBTLE.
ARE YOU SERIOUS? WHERE WAS THEIR SUBTLETY WHEN THEY KILLED MUDASHIR'S FATHER?
THE ARMY MIGHT NOT WANT TO OFFEND THE ARMY. NEWSPAPER OFFICES ARE RAIDED EVERY NOW AND THEN.
HOW DO YOU KNOW?
YOU DON'T READ THE NEWS. THERE'S MORE IN THE NEWSPAPERS THAN JUST THE PICTURES, YOU KNOW.
LOOK, READ THE POINT. THERE ARE MANY OTHER ISSUES. YOU COULD DRAW SOMETHING ABOUT POWER CUTS, OR INDIA-PAKISTAN RELATIONS...
BILAL, WAIT! BILAL!

BAMA, WAIT! WHAT ABOUT INDIA-PAKISTAN RELATIONS?
I LEFT THE NEWSPAPER SO YOU CAN READ IT YOURSELF.
YOU'RE MY BROTHER, PLEASE!
CAN'T YOU JUST SUMMARIZE IT FOR ME IN KASHMIRI? YOU READ URDU SO WELL.
IT'S A LONG STORY. I HAVE TO OPEN THE SHOP
PLEASE?
ALRIGHT. TALK ABOUT THE ELECTRICITY CRISIS.
I KNEW IT, YOU AREN'T TAKING IT SERIOUSLY!
ELECTRICITY'S SUCH A TRIVIAL ISSUE COMPARED TO THE INDIAN OCCUPATION OF KASHMIR.
BUT HOW DO I SHOW THE ELECTRICITY CRISIS?
LIKE EVERY CARTOONIST DOES– BLACK BULBS.
THE LINES OF THE POLITICAL CARTOONS ON THE NEWSPAPERS SEEMED EFFORTLESS. MUNNA THOUGHT DRAWING A POLITICAL CARTOON WAS A MATTER OF ONLY A FEW MINUTES.

BUT THE MINUTES TURNED INTO HOURS, AND THE HOURS INTO DAYS. MUNNU DREW OIL LAMPS, CANDLES AND BLACK BULBS AGAIN AND AGAIN ONLY TO REGRET RUINING A NUMBER OF DRAWING SHEETS.
MUNNU, BLOW THE CANDLE OUT BEFORE YOU SLEEP.
MAMMA, HOW WOULD YOU DEPICT THE ELECTRICITY CRISIS VISUALLY IF YOU WERE ON PATROL?
DRAW THAT THERE'S NO ELECTRICITY.
OBVIOUSLY, BUT HOW DO I ILLUSTRATE THAT?
YOU KNOW THAT BOYING, JUST BELOW THE CANDLE LIKE THE DARKNESS?
YEAH, BUT THAT'S A CLICHÉ.
BUT THAT'S IT! DAMAN IT, I'VE GOT IT!
YOU'RE A GENIUS, MAMMA!
BILAL TOOK MUNNU TO THE NEWSPAPER OFFICE ON HIS BICYCLE.

YOU MUST PUBLISH THIS, SIR. IT WOULD BE A CONTRIBUTION TO OUR SOCIETY.
KASHMIR GENERATES ELECTRICITY FOR NORTH INDIA, YET WE KASHMIRIS ARE DEPRIVED OF IT.
NAME OF THE CHILD?
SAGAR.
AGE?
13.
AND SO, ON SUNDAY, 3 NOVEMBER 2002, MUNNA'S FIRST CARTOON WAS PUBLISHED.
BILLA, THEY DID IT. LOOK, THEY PUBLISHED MY CARTOON. WAKE UP!
CONGRATS, YOU'RE A CARTOONIST...NOW LET ME SLEEP.
NO YOU CAN'T. I WANT TO DRAW ABOUT INDO-PAK RELATIONS NOW.
CHECK THIS, I READ THE PAPER AND UNDERLINED THE BITS I COULDN'T UNDERSTAND.
WOW, YOU'VE UNDERLINED THE WHOLE NEWSPAPER.
LOOK, I UNDERSTAND THAT INDIA AND PAKISTAN SHOULD MAKE PEACE, BUT IT ALSO SAYS AMERICA SHOULD INTERVENE. I DON'T UNDERSTAND. AMERICA IS SO FAR AWAY, HOW IS IT RELEVANT HERE?
LONG STORY. LET ME SLEEP FOR A FEW MORE MINUTES, PLEASE.

LISTEN, KASHMIR IS OCCUPIED BY BOTH INDIA AND PAKISTAN, AND AMERICA IS VERY RICH AND POWERFUL. BOTH INDIA AND PAKISTAN RELY ON AMERICA FOR AID AND POLITICAL SUPPORT.
BUT WHY AMERICA WHEN WE HAVE FREEDOM FIGHTERS IN KASHMIR?
ZZZ... THEY ARE DEAD.
SEE? THAT'S WHY I WANT TO DRAW ABOUT THE INDIAN ARMY.
WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DRAW?
A BEAR LOOKING A KASHMIRI.
DO WHATEVER YOU WANT, BUT LET ME SLEEP. ZZZ...
MUNNU DREW THE CARTOON, BUT THE ALBAR DIDN'T PUBLISH IT.
WITHOUT HIS OWN CARTOON, THE NEWSPAPER LOOKED BLANK TO MUNNU.
HE SUBMITTED ANOTHER ONE. PERHAPS ONE WAS ENOUGH?
A FEW WEEKS OF DISAPPOINTMENTS CONVINCED MUNNU TO GIVE UP HIS STUBBORNNESS AND PLEASE THE NEWSPAPER OWNERS WITH A CARTOON ABOUT A LESS CONTROVERSIAL ISSUE.

EXCUSE ME, SIR, WHERE'S THE ALSAFA OFFICE?
BILAL WAS SICK OF TAKING MANNA'S CARTOONS TO THE NEWSPAPER OFFICE IN VAIN. SO MANNA WENT ALONE.
YOU SEE THAT TEA VENDOR? ASK HIM.
EXCUSE ME, SIR, WHERE IS THE ALSAFA OFFICE?
IT'S SUNDAY. THE ALSAFA OFFICE IS CLOSED TODAY.
I JUST NEED DIRECTIONS.
IT'S TOO EARLY.
I WORK THERE.
HAHA, I WORK THERE AS WELL, BUT I'VE NEVER SEEN YOU. WHAT IS YOUR NAME?
YOU WORK THERE? MY NAME IS BILAL. IT'S SO NICE TO MEET YOU.
HERE, CHECK OUT MY CARTOONS. WOULD YOU PLEASE PUT ME IN TOUCH WITH THE EDITOR?
OH, I SEE. YOU'RE THE ONE WHO KEEPS SENDING US THE CARTOONS.
ARE THESE YOUR OWN IDEAS?
WHAT DO YOU MEAN? IT TAKES ME MANY TIMES TO DRAW A CARTOON.
THE ALSAFA
SORRY, YOU LOOK VERY YOUNG AND YOUR CARTOONS ARE MATURE. I OWN THE ALSAFA.
WHAT?
BANG

SO YOU'RE THE ONE WHO DOESN'T PUBLISH MY CARTOONS?
CALM DOWN, WE HAVE TO CARRY OTHER CHILDREN'S DRAWINGS AS WELL.
BUT IT BREAKS MY HEART TO DROP YOUR CARTOONS. THEY DESERVE TO BE SEEN.
WHY DON'T YOU DRAW SOMETHING ABOUT NEW YEAR'S EVE?
AND YOU'LL PUBLISH THAT?
YES. BUT IT HAS TO SHOW THAT THE SITUATION IS GOING TO REMAIN THE SAME IN KASHMIR WHETHER IT'S THIS YEAR OR THE NEXT. THE MISERIES OF KASHMIR AREN'T GOING AWAY UNDER THIS OCCUPATION—THERE'S NO RUN IN CELEBRATING THE NEW YEAR.
WE'RE ON THE SAME PAGE. MY MOTHER INSISTS ALL OF US BROTHERS CELEBRATE EID MODESTLY. THE ARMY'S KILLED MANY BOYS IN OUR NEIGHBOURHOOD, YOU KNOW. AND SHE SAYS THAT THE FIRECRACKERS REMIND THEIR FAMILIES OF THE GUN BATTLES.
EXACTLY.

THERE'S NOTHING NEW IN THE NEW YEAR, EXCEPT MORE DEATHS AND NEW DEATH ANNIVERSARIES.
WHAT IF I DRAW TWO BEARS WEARING PROW UNIFORMS? I'LL WRITE "GOOD" ON THE ONE HANGING, & HALF-DRAWN KASHMIR OVER TO THE OTHER ONE, "BAD"?
THAT'S IT! BUT DRAW TWO GIANTS INSTEAD, WITH BIG WORDS. AND THERE'S NO NEED TO DRAW THE ARMY UNIFORM.
EVEN BETTER! BUT PROMISE ME THAT YOU'LL PUBLISH IT.
I PROMISE AS LONG AS YOU SUBMIT IT BY TOMORROW EVENING!
I WILL.
HAVE SOME TEA.
NEXT TIME, I'D BETTER DRAW THIS CARTOON FIRST...
THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF MADE A COLLAGE OF THE MAIN HEADLINES OF 2001 ON THE THIRD PAGE...
... AND PLACED MUNNU'S CARTOON IN THE MIDDLE OF IT.
BALALA! MY CARTOON! SO BIG! ON PAGE 3!
THE NEW YEAR GREETED MUNNU WITH HIS NEW SUCCESS.

BUT I'M NOT CELEBRATING BECAUSE I GET A FEW MORE CARTOONS PUBLISHED. WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN BILATERAL AND TRIPARTITE TALKS?
TRIPARTITE WOULD BE IF KASHMIRIS WERE INCLUDED IN INDO-PAK TALKS. BUT SINCE KASHMIRIS ARE ALWAYS EXCLUDED, IT BECOMES BILATERAL TALK.
THAT SOUNDS TOO COMPLICATED. WHO'S KOFI ANNAN?
HEAD OF THE U.N.
MUANU DREW FOR ME ALMOST EVERY WEEK FOR SEVERAL MONTHS...
BILAL, HOW ABOUT IF I NAME INDIA AND PAKISTAN MEANWHILE EACH OTHER?
BUT YOU'VE ALREADY RECYCLED THE INDO-PAK ISSUE TOO MANY TIMES.
NOT REALLY, LAST TIME I PUT INDIA AND PAKISTAN IN BUSH'S POCKETS.
.. BUT THE EDITOR ONLY PUBLISHED MY CARTOONS ONCE OR TWICE A MONTH.
SEE THE NEWS? SOME KASHMIRIS HAVE BEEN BACKED UNDER POTA IN DELHI. DO YOU KNOW WHAT P.O.T.A. IS?
IT'S A NEW LAW TO ARREST TERRORISTS.
WHAT IF I DRAW POTA AS A BIG VICIOUS SNAKE CIRCLED AROUND KASHMIRIS?
TRY READING THE NEWS FIRST.

THE HEADLINE IS ENOUGH. IT SAYS KASHMIRIS ARRESTED SOME IN INDIA AND THE DELHI POLICE TREATS THEM AS TERRORISTS.
ENOUGH OF POLITICS! AT LEAST OPEN YOUR BOOKS ONCE! YOU'RE IN THE 10TH GRADE AND YOUR RESULTS WILL BE PUBLISHED IN THE SAME NEWSPAPER!
I LOVE YOU, PAPA. P.O.T.A. CAN WAIT! TODAY I'LL DRAW ABOUT THE BURDEN OF EDUCATION.
KNOCK
BUT THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF DIDN'T OPEN THE DOOR OF HIS OFFICE THAT DAY.
MUMMY KNOCKED ON THE DOOR AGAIN THE NEXT SUNDAY.
KNOCK
THEN AGAIN THE NEXT SUNDAY.
KNOCK KNOCK
WHAT IS IT?
AND THEN AGAIN.
I WANT TO SEE THE EDITOR. I'M A CARTOONIST.
HE'S SLEEPING.
STOP IT! DON'T TRY TO FOOL ME. OUR CARTOONIST IS IN HIS BED!

I DRAW CARTOONS FOR PAGE 3. BUT THE EDITOR DOESN'T PUBLISH MY CARTOONS ANY MORE. I WANT TO TALK TO HIM.
DO YOU GET PAID?
I DON'T CARE ABOUT THE MONEY. I JUST WANT MY CARTOONS PUBLISHED.
OH DEAR! YOU'RE AN IDIOT.
LISTEN, I'M A CLERKER HERE AND I HAVE A FAMILY TO FEED AND I WOULDN'T WANT ANYONE TO JEOPARDISE MY JOB.
THE SAME GOES FOR OUR CARTOONIST. YOU THINK WE'LL JUST LET YOU TAKE HIS PLACE? WHAT IF YOU WERE IN HIS POSITION?
YOU SHOULD SHOW YOUR CARTOONS TO THE DAILY G.K.* I DON'T THINK THEY HAVE A CARTOONIST.
YOU'RE WASTING YOUR TIME HERE.
OBITUARY
* THE ENGLISH-LANGUAGE DAILY BRITISH-INDIAN NEWSPAPER.
OBITUARY
HIS NAME WAS MUSHTAQ AND HE DIED A FEW WEEKS LATER WHEN HIS GOWN GOT STUCK IN THE WHEELS OF THE OFFSET PRINTING PRESS.
THE G.K. OFFICE IS NEAR PRATAP PARK, IN THE CITY CENTRE.
FOR SEVERAL MONTHS HIS VOICE ECHOED IN MUNNU'S HEAD.

JANUARY 2003.
GREETER KASHMIR
BBC
G.K. WAS THE BIGGEST ENGLISH NEWSPAPER IN KASHMIR AND MUNNU WAS AFRAID OF REJECTION.
DO YOU HAVE AN AD?
RECEPTION
IT HAD NOW BEEN AROUND NINE MONTHS SINCE MUNNU'S LAST CARTOON WAS PUBLISHED.
NO, SIR. I WANT TO SEE THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF. I'M A CARTOONIST.
DO YOU WANT TO DRAW CARTOONS FOR G.K.?
RECEPTION
YES, SIR.
AND MAYBE MY 17-YEAR-OLD DAUGHTER SHOULD TRY WRITING AN EDITORIAL!
HAHAHAHA HA HA!
STOP LAUGHING, YOU'RE BREAKING MY HEART!
HEY, MUDDO, YOU OKAY? THEY WERE JUST TEASING YOU. LET'S HAVE SOME TEA.
THESE DRAWINGS ARE WONDERFUL. CAN YOU DRAW MY PORTRAIT?
NOT NOW. I WANT TO GO HOME.
THEN FOLLOW ME FIRST.

COME ON, DON'T BE SHY.
ONE SQUARE INCH WILL COST AROUND THREE HUNDRED RUPEES.
JUST SHOW HIM YOUR CARTOONS. HE'S THE EDITOR.
KNOCK KNOCK
COME IN.
SIR, THIS KID IS A CARTOONIST AND HE WANTS TO TALK TO YOU.
WHAT IS IT, SON?
AHEM. SIR, I'M A CARTOONIST. I'D BE GRATEFUL IF YOU'D TAKE A LOOK AT MY WORK.
SO YOU'RE SKOOD? DID YOU DRAW THESE CARTOONS?
YES, SIR. I USED TO WORK FOR THE ALMANA
WHAT CAN I DO FOR YOU?
I WANT TO DRAW POLITICAL CARTOONS FOR YOUR PAPER, SIR.
SHOULDN'T YOU BE IN SCHOOL?
SIR, I FINISHED MY 10TH-GRADE EXAMS RECENTLY.
DRAW THREE CARTOONS ABOUT SOME CURRENT ISSUES FOR TOMORROW. THEN WE'LL SEE. MEANWHILE, STAY AWAY FROM GIRLS.

THIS ROAD IS CLOSED!
UNDAY'S REPUBLIC DAY WAS NEAR, SO THE ARMY HAD BARRICADED MANY MAIN STREETS...
IDENTITY CARD
... WHICH PROVIDED MANNU WITH THE IDEA FOR THE FIRST CARTOON.
THAT YEAR, WINTER WAS SUNNY. THERE WAS NO TRACE OF CLOUDS, RAIN OR SNOW...
... WHICH WAS NATURALLY A CAUSE OF CONCERN FOR KASHMIR.
DAMN IT!
AND OF COURSE THERE WAS THE ELECTRICITY CRISIS.
EDITION
THE EDITOR WAS IN A MELTING. THE NEXT DAY, HE HAD NO TIME TO SEE MANNU.
THERE'S NO SPACE ON THE FRONT- YOUR AD WILL GO ON PAGE 4.
THE MEETING CONTINUED FOR THE SECOND DAY AS WELL.
WE DON'T GIVE DISCOUNTS ON OBITUARIES.
ON THE THIRD DAY, THE EDITOR WAS HAVING LUNCH AND WAS IN NO MOOD TO SEE MANNU.

ON THE FOURTH DAY, MANNU MANAGED TO GET INTO THE EDITOR'S OFFICE.
I LIKE THESE CARTOONS. YOU SHOULD ALWAYS SUBMIT YOUR WORK BEFORE 6PM.
SIR, I BOUGHT THREE SWEETS FOR YOU. I PASSED THE 10TH GRADE SUCCESSFULLY.
AND IT WOULD BE GOOD FOR YOU TO DRAW YOUR CARTOONS HERE, THAT WAY YOU CAN INTERACT WITH THE REPORTERS AND SUB-EDITORS
IN THE MORNING, MANNU GOT THE NEWS THAT HE HAD PASSED HIS TEDIOUS 10TH-GRADE EXAMS...
...AND IN THE EVENING, HE GOT HIS DREAM JOB. HE HAD EVERY REASON TO VIOLATE THE TRAFFIC RULES.
THIS ROAD IS CLOSED.
I WORK FOR THE PRESS!
HE WAS THE HAPPIEST CREATURE ON THE SURFACE OF THE EARTH THAT DAY.
IDENTITY CARD?
ALRIGHT, I'LL TAKE THE OTHER ROUTE.

THAT HOPELESS BOY MADE MUMBLING SUSPICIOUS, PERHAPS THE EDITOR WAS JUST BEING NICE TO AN ENTHUSIASTIC KID.
WAITING FOR THE MORNING NEWSPAPER, THE NIGHT SEEMED LIKE AN ETERNITY.
THAT NIGHT HE WAS GIVEN A WHITE NAVY UNIFORM IN A DREAM.
YOU SHOULD JOIN OUR TROPER FROM TOMORROW. MAKE SURE YOU WEAR THIS UNIFORM.
WEARING THAT UNIFORM, HE SPLASHED PAINT ON THE LONG, WIDE CANVASES LIKE JACKSON POLLOCK.
HE WOKE UP AT 5 AM...
... AND RODE TO THE CITY CENTRE.

HAWKERS WERE STANDING THERE WAITING FOR THE NEWSPAPER TRUCK TO ARRIVE.
PRESS
HIS CARTOON WAS PUBLISHED ON THE FRONT PAGE.
THE NAME BRAND ON THE PAGE BEARER WATERMARK. IT WAS SURREAL. HE SCRATCHED THE LINES OF HIS CARTOON ON THE NEWSPRINT...
...AND SHOWED IT TO THE HAWKERS, TO CONFIRM THAT IT WASN'T A DREAM.
BACK HOME, HIS FAMILY CELEBRATED WITH SAFFRON TEA.
SIR, I NEED AN IDENTITY CARD
THAT DAY, HE SUBMITTED HIS CARTOON SEVERAL HOURS BEFORE THE DEADLINE.
HEY, YOU! STOP! THIS ROAD IS CLOSED!
I'M THE PRESS!
INSIDE OUT
REPUBLIC DAY OF INDIA

SCRAPBOOK

I LOST MY CAT. SHE WASN'T EATING, SO I TOOK HER TO A VET. THAT BRUTE GRABBED HER TAIL AND SHE JUMPED FROM THE WINDOW. SHE'S ALL I HAVE; MY FAMILY, MY FRIEND.
I MISS HER.
WHO WILL LOOK AFTER HER? GOD, SHE MIGHT GET RUN OVER BY SOME CRAZY DRIVER! PLEASE HELP ME FIND HER.
RAWR!
WHY ARE YOU LAUGHING? YOU THINK I'M A CLOWN?
SORRY, SIR. THE WOMAN WHO WAS HERE EARLIER HAD LOST HER SON. AND THE GUY WITH CRUTCHES, HE WAS ARRESTED, STARVED AND LAID ON AN ICE SLAB FOR THE BRAWL. DOCTORS HAD TO AMPUTATE ONE OF HIS LEGS AND HIS TOES.
THEY DIDN'T SHED A SINGLE TEAR. AND HERE YOU ARE WEEPING OVER A CAT!
SHE WASN'T JUST A CAT. SHE WAS MY LIFE! SHE WAS THIS SMALL WHEN I FOUND HER. MANY YEARS AGO.
AND NOW I'VE LOST HER...
WE'LL RUN A STORY. DO YOU HAVE HER PHOTO?

HEY, RICHARD, THIS WILL MAKE AN INTERESTING STORY FOR THE "IN ANYBODY LISTENING?" PAGE.
SAIGAO, YOU SHOULD DO A CARTOON. SHOW THAT ANIMALS ARE MORE IMPORTANT THAN HUMANS IN KASHMIR.
SORRY, I'VE ALREADY DONE ONE ABOUT THE GOVERNMENT'S CLAIMS OF A "HEALING TOUCH" FOR THE VICTIMS OF CONFLICT.
SAIGAO AVOIDED READING THE NEWS. IT WAS DAUNTING.
HEALING TOUCH
INSTEAD HE RELIED ON HIS PERSONAL SCRAPBOOK, IN WHICH HE HAD COLLECTED PICTURES OF THE NEWSMAKERS IN KASHMIR.

HURRIYAT

THE SCRAPBOOK MADE SADAT'S
JOB POSSIBLE FOR SEVERAL
YEARS...

BUT BEING UNFAMILIAR WITH THE HISTORY OF KASHMIR AND THE DEPTH OF PAKISTAN, I LOOKED THE VOCABULARY TO RECYCLE OR REPHRASE THE SAME IDEAS THROUGH DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES.
THIS CARTOON LOOKS NO DIFFERENT FROM THE EARLIER ONES. YOU MUST AVOID REDUNDANCY TO BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY. DON'T DISAPPOINT ME, SON.
?
?
BATTLING WITH THE NEWSLINE DAILY DEADLINES, SCOOP FELT LIKE HE WAS ON A SUBMARINE RUNNING OUT OF AIR.
HOW ABOUT THE WRIJING TOUCH?
YOU DREW THAT THE DAY BEFORE YESTERDAY!
WHAT ABOUT THE PRINT? EVERYDAY KILLINGS?
AVOID REDUN-DANCY!
ELECTRICITY? THE TRAFFIC MESS? THE SHRINKING GREEN BELT?
THOSE ARE TRIVIAL ISSUES, REMEMBER. KASHMIR-FREEDOM FIRST!

HOW ABOUT HAMRAYAT, THEN?
WELL... EVERY HUMAN BEING HAS SOME FLAWS. THEY FIGHT FOR FREEDOM.
I HATE MY LIFE, YOU KNOW. MY SCHOOL FRIENDS HAVE FORMED CRICKET TEAMS.
THEY GO ON PICNICS AS WELL.
CARTOONS HAVE CRIPPLED ME.
YES, THAT'S TRUE, BUT YOU CAN GIVE UP.
FUCK OFF!
FRUSTRATION LEFT SAGAD TALKING TO HIMSELF.
BUT SOON INTERNATIONAL HEADLINES BECAME RELEVANT LOCALLY.
COMMENTING ON THE IRAQ WAR WAS AS EASY AS SWITCHING AK-47S AT SCHOOL.

BUT EVENTUALLY EVEN COMMENTING ON THE IRAQ WAR BECAME STALE.
WORDS LIKE "PEACE" AND "WAR" HAD BECOME CLICHÉS.
AND CARTOONS ABOUT INTRA-PARTY CONFLICT HAD LOST THEIR NEWS VALUE AND SEEMED LIKE A HEADLINE ON A VINTAGE POSTER.
SATRAPI HAD TO READ EACH PAGE OF EVERY NEWSPAPER TO AVOID BECOMING REDUNDANT.
IT WAS ONE OF THOSE DAYS IN 2004 WHEN A PICTURE OF SOMEONE SATRAPI RECOGNISED GRACED THE FRONT OF A LOCAL TABLOID. IT MADE SATRAPI NOSTALGIC FOR LIFE, AND HE STARTED DRAWING.

SAMAR WAS MOURNING OVER THE DEAD BODY OF HER RELATIVE, SHOT DEAD BY AN UNIDENTIFIED SNIPER.
SAMAR USED HIS BRUSH AS A WEAPON THEN DAY AGAINST HER RELATIVE'S MURDERER.
HMM, THE ARMY, AS EXPECTED.
SIR, WHEN INDEPENDENCE DAY IS APPROACHING, SO I THOUGHT IT MIGHT BE RELEVANT.
AGE HAD ONLY ADDED MORE GRACE TO HER BEAUTIFUL FACE. SHE STILL WORE JEANS.
HE FELT CLAUSTRO-PHOBIC WHEN HE LOOKED AWAY.
SAMAR ADDED HER PICTURE TO HIS SCRAPBOOK OF NEWSMAKERS.
HE SPED TO DARBSGAN, HOPING TO SEE HER.
KNOCK KNOCK

OH MR UNITOGNIST! COME IN, COME IN.
SORRY, YOU HAD TO WAIT OUTSIDE, I WAS PRAYING. YOU SHOULD HAVE COME EARLIER- I'D HAVE INTRODUCED YOU TO MY NEW STUDENTS.
I HAD TO DRAW AN INSIDE OUT.
WHAT A SHAME, I'M ALMOST 17 AND I CAN'T EVEN READ THE QURAN.
THERE'S NO AGE LIMIT FOR LEARNING THE QURAN.
I WISH I HAD TIME TO VISIT HERE MORE OFTEN. I MISS THIS PLACE.
HMM, I CAN GUESS WHOM YOU ARE MISSING. SHE CANNOT COME HERE ANY MORE. BUT IF YOU WANT TO LEARN THE QURAN, I CAN TEACH YOU ANY TIME.
WITH SAMAD'S NEW STATUS, MOLVI SAHIB WAS FRIENDLIER TO HIM.
NOW THAT YOU'RE A MEDIA MAN, ANY INTERESTING RUMOURS OUT THERE? WHAT IS GOING TO HAPPEN TO KASHMIR?
I CAN'T REALLY FIGURE OUT THE POLITICS HERE.
HOW MUCH DO THEY PAY YOU?
WELL, G.A. PAYS ME 2,000 RUPEES PER MONTH.

BUT I DON'T REALLY CARE ABOUT THE MONEY. I JUST FIND IT VERY HARD TO MAKE A CARTOON THESE DAYS.
OF COURSE, A CARTOON IS WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS.
I DON'T MEAN THAT. YOU SEE, I'VE DRAWN HUNDREDS OF CARTOONS ABOUT THE INDIAN OCCUPATION, TORTURE, KILLING AND SO ON. I THINK IT'S TIME TO EXPOSE THE LAZY AND CORRUPT RESISTANCE LEADERS. BUT I FEEL IT MIGHT BETRAY THE CAUSE.
WHAT ABOUT THEM?
YOU KNOW THEY LOOK LIKE REVOLUTIONARIES IN THE PHOTOSHOPPED PICTURES IN THE NEWSPAPERS, BUT THEY DON'T EVEN WRITE THEIR OWN STATEMENTS MOST OF THE TIME...
MOST OF THEM GET REPORTERS TO WRITE WHATEVER SEEMS RELEVANT TO THE SITUATION AND PUT IT OUT AS THEIR QUOTE.
THEN THE SPOKESPERSON OF THE LEADER FEEDS REPORTERS CHICKEN PATTIES IN RETURN, TAKES THEM TO THE RESTAURANTS.
SOME-TIMES I GET A BITE AS WELL.
THOSE AREN'T CHICKEN PATTIES- THEY ARE THE FLESH OF THE MARTYRS! I HAD MANY BRIGHT STUDENTS WHO SACRIFICED THEIR LIVES FOR KASHMIR. IF THEY WERE TO RISE FROM THEIR GRAVES, THEY'D REGRET GOING SO MUCH.

I THINK THEY'D BE HAPPY THAT THEY DON'T BELONG TO THE HYPOCRITICAL SOCIETY ANY MORE.
WHAT'S WORSE IS THAT ALL THE RESISTANCE LEADERS CLAIM TO HAVE THE SAME GOAL OF LIBERATING KASHMIR FROM INDIAN OCCUPATION, YET THEY DISGRACE EACH OTHER AT PUBLIC RALLIES, BLAME EACH OTHER FOR SELLING OUT.
INDIA WORKS HARD TO DIVIDE AND RULE US.
EXACTLY, BOTH INDIA AND PAKISTAN.
CRACKS IN THE RESISTANCE LEADERSHIP WILL SPLIT THEIR FOLLOWERS; THERE WILL BE VIOLENT CLASHES IN THE COMMUNITY. AND FREEDOM WILL ONLY ALLOW PEOPLE TO DESPISE AND KILL EACH OTHER.
YOU SEE, OUR LEADERS AREN'T KIDS. THEY KNOW INDIA; THEY'VE BEEN TO TORTURE CELLS AND THE FUNERALS OF MARTYRS - YET THEY MISS THE POINT.
YOU SHOULD TELL US THROUGH YOUR CARTOONS.
I WANT TO, BUT PEOPLE MIGHT THINK I'M DEMEANING THEIR HOMES. THEY MIGHT CALL ME A TRAITOR.
AND I DON'T KNOW THE HISTORY WELL.

WELL, HISTORY IS NOTHING BUT DOCUMENTED EVERYDAY EVENTS. IF A PATIENT NEEDS A PILL, DON'T BE AFRAID THAT IT'S BITTER. I THINK YOU UNDERSTAND THE PULSE OF CURRENT POLITICS—AND YOUR INTENTIONS ARE GOOD.
REMEMBER, PAINTING, THE REAL PICTURE SHOULD BE YOUR GOAL.
PAINT THE REAL PICTURE. TELL ME WHO INVENTED THE BULB?
THEN WAS A QUESTION—WHO INVENTED THE BULB?
EDISON.
WILL HE GO TO HELL OR HEAVEN?
HELL, OF COURSE! HE WAS A CHRISTIAN. OR MAYBE A JEW.
BUT AREN'T KABBA AND MEDINA ILLUMINATED BY WE INVENTION? NOW WHAT DO YOU THINK?
I DON'T KNOW.
GOOD DOUBTS ARE STEPS TOWARDS ENLIGHTENMENT. DON'T LET THE FOAM ON THE SURFACE OF THE OCEAN KEEP YOU FROM EXPLORING THE WORLD UNDERNEATH.

REMEMBER WHEN I PUNISHED YOU FOR FLIRTING WITH THAT LITTLE GIRL.
THAT WAS CRUEL, MOLVI SAHIB.
BUT, YOU SEE, IT WAS NECESSARY. YOU WOULD HAVE GROWN INTO ONE MORE POMER, NOT A CARTOONIST. SIMILARLY, LEADERS NEED SPANKING SOMETIMES TO KEEP THEM ON TRACK.
WHAT IF THEY FAIL?
HAHA, YOU WERE A LITTLE KID THEN! WHAT DID YOUR SISTER CALL YOUR MUMMY...? HAHA! YOU'LL ALWAYS BE MUMMY IN OUR EYES. BUT LET'S BE SERIOUS.
ONCE A BELIEVER ASKED OUR BELOVED PROPHET, PEACE BE UPON HIM, HIS FAMILY AND FRIENDS, "YOU, MY BELOVED, WHAT WOULD BE THE MOST APPROPRIATE THING TO WISH FOR IN THIS FLEETING WORLD?"
THE PROPHET, PEACE BE UPON HIM, HIS FAMILY AND FRIENDS, SAID, "PRAY THUS: OH ALLAH, SHOW ME THINGS THE WAY THEY ARE AND NOT THE WAY THEY APPEAR TO OUR EYES!!"

EVEN THOUGH MOLVI SAHIB'S ADVICE ECHOED IN MUNNU'S HEAD FOR SEVERAL DAYS, HE COULD NOT IGNORE THE OBVIOUS— CURFEW-LIKE RESTRICTIONS WERE PUT IN PLACE BY THE ARMY, WHO THEN HOISTED FLAGS TO CELEBRATE INDIAN INDEPENDENCE DAY.
SPLAAAM.
HOW ON EARTH DID YOU GET PAST THE ARMY.
PRESS
REPORTERS AND SUB-EDITORS CAMPED IN THE S.M. OFFICE FOR DAYS BEFORE 15 AUGUST TO AVOID BREAKING THE LAW BY STEPPING OUT INTO THE STREETS.
YOU'RE PUTTING YOUR LIFE AT RISK UNNECESSARILY. A CARTOON ISN'T THAT IMPORTANT. IT'S JUST A SPACE-FILLER.
I FEEL RESTLESS AT HOME.
YEAHH, RIGHT. THE MUNICIPALITY WILL SUE US FOR ENCOURAGING CHILD LABOUR IF THEY SEE YOU DRAWING CARTOONS HERE!

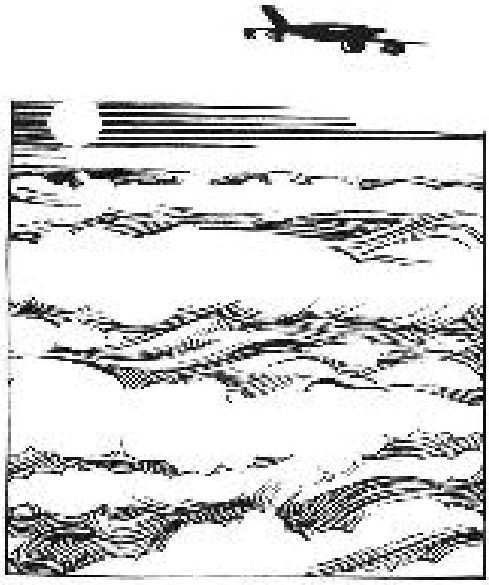
IS THIS SEWAGE OR TEA?
I TOLD YOU, ALL THE SHOPS ARE CLOSED OUTSIDE. IT'S IS AUGUST!
WHY DIDN'T YOU BUY IT YESTERDAY?
I WAS TOO BUSY PEEING YOU DINNER.
PLEASE, WOULD YOU PLEASE SHUT UP? I'M TRYING TO SLEEP. I WAS WORKING ALL NIGHT.
WELL, THIS TEA, HE WAS WATCHING PORN ALL DAY YESTERDAY.
MAYBE WOULD BE KIND ENOUGH TO SPRAY ME SOME CREAM INTO YOUR CUP.
SHUT UP, THERE'S A KID HERE!
SIGMUND, GO AND DRAW YOUR CARTOON!
SURE, AS IF HE DOESN'T KNOW WE USE IT FOR MORE THAN PEEING!
PUTTS!

OUTSIDE THE OFFICE, INDIAN TURGS CAMOUFLE ROAD THE SKY ABOVE.
HOW WOULD SOMEONE CARRYING A SCREWDRIVER GO UNNOTICED IN THIS SEA OF UNIFORMS?
EVEN IF IT WAS A SECURITY LAPSE, WHY WOULD THE CIVILIANS LIVING IN THE VICINITY DESERVE THE WRATH OF THE JACKBOOTS AND GUN BUTTS?
PERHAPS SUCH DISPLAY OF ANGER CONCEALED THE INCOMPETENCY OF THE ARMY.

SAMMY, THE ARMY CALLED. THEY WERE LOOKING FOR YOUR PHONE NUMBER.
THEY DON'T KNOW WHAT I LOOK LIKE, DO THEY?
DON'T WORRY, I TOLD THEM YOU WERE AT SCHOOL.
SAMMY WAS ALSO AT SCHOOL THE NEXT DAY WHEN THEY CALLED AGAIN.
HOWEVER, A WEEK AFTERWARDS, THE ARMY HAD CORDONED OFF THE PRESS COLONY AND SEVERAL MILITARY JEEPS WERE PARKED OUTSIDE B.K.
BPC

SAZAD, COME HERE.
SIR, THIS IS SAZAD, OUR CARTOONIST.
SORRY YOU HAD TO WAIT. I WAS AT SCHOOL.
THE ARMY OFFICER, WHO WAS WAITING FOR SAZAD AT 6:00 HAD TWO STARS AND AN ARCHER'S LION INSIGNIA ON HIS SHOULDER.
YOU MEAN I WAS WAITING FOR HIM? THIS KID IS SAZAD?
ARE YOU KIDDING ME? YOU'RE TELLING ME THAT HE'S THE ONE WHO DREW THE CARTOON?
SUPPOSE I BELIEVE YOU DREW IT, SAZAD. DO I LOOK LIKE AN INCOMPETENT SOLDIER TO YOU? AM I ON CRUTCHES? HOW OLD ARE YOU?
16.
YOU'RE TELLING ME THIS KID IS YOUR EDITORIAL CARTOONIST? SERIOUSLY, DO I LOOK LIKE A FOOL TO YOU? DO YOU KNOW THE CONSEQUENCES?
SIR, THE KID IS VERY TALENTED.
WELL, SIR, THEY'RE SHOWING ME A 16-YEAR-OLD KID TELLING ME THAT HE'S SAZAD.
YEAH, YEAH. NO, I WON'T TAKE HIM.

SO, SAJAD. TELL ME WHAT MADE YOU URKIN US ON CRUTCHES?
RECEPTION
SIR, THIS KID IS A PURE JEWEL!
THE PAKISTI EDITOR CAUGHT SAJAD'S EYE AND OPENED HIS EYELIDS WIDE. AND WITH THE NEXT MOVEMENT OF HIS EYES, HE POINTED AT THE EXIT.
SIR, IT WAS GREAT TO SEE YOU. I'M AN OPENING FOR TODAY'S CARTOON.
WHATEVER, I'M TELLING YOU THAT SOMEONE IS USING THIS KID AS THEIR MOUTHPIECE!
NOT AT ALL, SIR. REMEMBER, WHEN THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA VISITED KASHMIR A FEW MONTHS AGO? SAJAD DREW HIS PORTRAIT AND PRESENTED IT TO HIM ON BEHALF OF THE CHILDREN OF KASHMIR. PURE JEWEL, SIR, PURE JEWEL.



AEROPLANE

IT WAS SUNNY.
NO ONE HAD DIED THAT DAY, AT LEAST NO ONE THAT SHARD KNEW.
THE NEWSPAPER CARRIED HIS CARTOON EVERY DAY.
MOMMA AND PAPA WERE YOUNG AND HEALTHY.
SO WHY THIS PANG OF MELANCHOLY? WHERE HAVE THESE TEARS COME FROM?
PICK UP. PICK UP. ANSWER!
HELLO, WHY DIDN'T YOU ANSWER THE PHONE? WHERE'S MAMMA?
SHE ISN'T HERE.
WHO ARE YOU?
I'M SHARD, A NEIGHBOR.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING IN OUR HOUSE?
SHOULD I TELL HIM? SHAHNAZ? SHOULD I TELL HIM?
OF COURSE YOU CAN TELL ME! WHAT IS IT? I'M THINKING THE WORST! WHO'S CRYING?

ASK HIM TO COME TO EDDAH.
WHAT'S GOING ON? YOU'RE DRIVING ME CRAZY! DID SOMEONE DIE?
SAYID, YOUR ABBA PASSED AWAY IN THE HOSPITAL, JUST NOW.
AND IN THE NEXT FEW HOURS...
...AMIDST THE SCREAMS AND MOURNING, SAYID PINCHED ABBA'S TOE. ABBA DIDN'T RESPOND. HIS FACE WAS COVERED WITH A BLANKET.
BILAL, PAPA, AKHTAR AND ADIL WASHED ABBA AND SPRINKLED PERFUME ON HIS BODY.
THEN THEY WRAPPED HIM IN A WHITE SHROUD. AFTERWARDS THEY LIFTED HIM AND LAID HIM INTO THE COFFIN, WHICH WAS MADE OF TIN AND TIMBER AND CUSHIONED WITH DRY YELLOW GRASS.

MANY PEOPLE HAD ASSEMBLED FOR ABBA'S FUNERAL PROCEEDINGS.
THE GRAVE-DIGGER HAD ALREADY DUG THE GRAVE, BUT PAPA WANTED TO MAKE SURE IT WAS COMFORTABLE FOR ABBA. SO HE LAID IN THE GRAVE HIMSELF FIRST AND STRETCHED HIS BODY IN THE ALCOVE CARVED ON THE RIGHT SIDE OF THE BOTTOM OF THE PIT.
HE PLACED A COUPLE OF SUN-DRIED BRICKS THERE AS A CUSHION FOR ABBA.
ABBA WAS THEN LIFTED FROM THE COFFIN AND LAID INTO THE GRAVE.
THE ALCOVE WAS THEN WALLED UP WITH SUN-DRIED BRICKS, WHICH PARTED ABBA FROM THE EVENING LIGHT.
THE PILE OF SOIL NEXT TO THE GRAVE WAS THEN PUSHED INTO THE PIT WITH SPADES, HANDS, CLODDS AND HOES.

ABBA WANTED TO SEE OUR FACES BEFORE HE DIED.
TODAY OR TOMORROW EVERYONE HAS TO DIE, MUNNU. NO ONE'S HERE FOR EVER.
DID YOU PAY THE GRAVEDIGGER?
YEAH, HE THOUGHT WE WERE BURYING A BIG OF CASH. WE WANTED EXTRA.
ONE BY ONE, EVERYONE LEFT THE GRAVEYARD.
MUNNU, PULL YOURSELF TOGETHER. YOU HAVEN'T PACKED YET. WHAT TIME IS YOUR FLIGHT TOMORROW?
I DON'T WANT TO GO, BILAL.
STUPID, NOT EVERYONE GETS AN OPPORTUNITY TO REPRESENT KASHMIR TO THE WORLD OUTSIDE. GOD IS EVERYWHERE, SO YOU CAN PRAY FOR ABBA ANYWHERE.
MAKE SURE YOU TAKE THE CAMERA TO G.K. EVERY DAY. THAT WAY WE'LL KNOW YOU'RE DOING WELL.
AS THE AIRPLANE ROSE ABOVE THE MOUNTAINS, THE VALLEY WAS BURIED UNDER THE CLOUDS AND SO, IT SEEMED, WERE THE MISERIES AND DISTRESS WHICH CHANGED ON THE LAND.

HOW WAS IT, MUNNIU? YOU LOOK A BIT WORN OUT.
IT SEEMED THERE WAS NO ONE AT HOME WITHOUT YOU.
HOW WAS THE PLANE RIDE?
SAMAD RETURNED TWO WEEKS LATER...
I FELT LIKE I WAS IN SRINAGAR, NATURALLY. ALMOST THE SAME TINY ALLEYS, WOOD AND BRICK HOUSES, MOUNTAINS... BUT IT'S A BIT HOTTER IN KATHMANDU.
ANYWAY, I MET MANY WRITERS, ARTISTS AND JOURNALISTS FROM SOUTH ASIAN COUNTRIES. WE WROTE A STORY ABOUT THE CHILDREN OF CONFLICT—
...WHO ACCIDENTALLY CROSS A BORDER TO RESCUE THEIR PUPPY BUT THEY GET IN TROUBLE!
THE CHILDREN IN THE ILLUSTRATIONS SHOULD LOOK LIKE THE ONES LIVING IN DISPUTED KASHMIR.
BUT KASHMIR ISN'T DISPUTED, IT'S AN OCCUPATION! IT DOESN'T BELONG TO INDIA OR PAKISTAN.
WELL, YOU'RE TOO YOUNG SINCE YOU GROW UP... IT'S NOT SO BLACK AND WHITE.
BUT... IT'S NOT THE INDIAN ARMY VERSUS THE PAKISTANI ARMY IN KASHMIR. IT'S AN OCCUPATION - THE ARMY KILLS INNOCENT PEOPLE THERE EVERY DAY. I MIGHT NOT KNOW MUCH ABOUT OUR HISTORY, BUT I WAS BORN AND LIVE IN KASHMIR, AND I WANT INDEPENDENCE!

AND SOME FAMOUS JOURNALISTS FROM TELA INVITED US FOR A COFFEE...
I LIKE YOUR CARICATURE OF OUR PRIME MINISTER IN YOUR CARTOONS.
BUT I WAS IN ONCE AND AT THAT TIME I HAVEN'T UNDERSTOOD POLITICS. YOU MAY DRAW THE CARTOONS... BUT FRANKLY I DON'T THINK IT'S POSSIBLE.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
I LIKE YOUR DRAWINGS, THEY'RE WONDERFUL, BUT I DON'T THINK THE MESSAGE YOU GIVE IN THEM IS YOUR OWN.
WELL, I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY BUT YOU OPEN WATCH ME DRAW ONE RIGHT HERE.
THEN SHE TELLS ME THAT I HAVEN'T READ THE HISTORY OF KASHMIR. I WOULD HAVE TOLD HER ABOUT MYSELF AND MY LIFE IN KASHMIR, BUT MY ENGLISH SUCKS. SHE SMILED SWEET BUT WAS POISONOUS.
BUT I MANAGED TO SAY THAT I MIGHT NOT KNOW WHERE THE BULLET CAME FROM BUT I COULD TELL HER WHO THE BULLET HIT. AND THAT SHUT HER UP. BITCH! THE GOOD NEWS IS THAT I GOT 300 U.S. DOLLARS. I MUST BUY SOME HISTORY BOOKS!
AND WATCH YOUR MOUTH!
THE TONGUE-TWISTING WORDS THAT MAKE HISTORY BOOKS SOUND OFFICIAL AND LIVE THE HOLDER OF SACRED TRUTH HAD THE SAME EFFECT AS SLEEPING PILLS ON SATAN.
IF ONLY THE SAINTS HAD WRITTEN HISTORY, ONE COULD SOAK THE SACRED PAGES IN A JUG OF WATER AND GULP THEM DOWN FOR ENLIGHTENMENT AT ONCE WITHOUT HAVING TO GO THROUGH ALL THAT READING.

SAJAD SOUGHT A SHORTCUT. HE ATTENDED WRITERS' WORKSHOPS AND CULTURAL EVENTS, AND INTERVIEWED POETS, HISTORIANS, JOURNALISTS AND INTELLECTUALS TO HEAR AN ORAL HISTORY INSTEAD...

WE'VE BEEN ENSLAVED FOR CENTURIES, SLAVERY RUNS IN OUR BLOOD! THERE'S NO CURE TO IT!
THE HISTORIAN.

THE FREEDOM MOVEMENT IN KASHMIR IS NOT ANY NATIONALISTIC REVOLUTION. IN FACT ITS FOUNDATION IS LAID ON ISLAMIC MONOTHEISM AND IT IS RELIGIOUS OBLIGATION ON THE MUSLIMS OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR TO KEEP THIS ISLAMIC MOVEMENT GOING ON.
A RESISTANCE LEADER.

OH, THOSE KASHMIRI PANDITS! THEY ALWAYS COLLABORATED WITH THE INVADERS AND RODE TO THE MISERIES OF KASHMIRIS. AND FLED KASHMIR IN THE HARSH WINTERS.
THE POET.

CHECK OUT GEORGE ORWELL. HE WRITES SHORT, CRISP SENTENCES. SENTENCES HAVE TO BE SHORT AND CRISP. YOU, YOU AND YOU— CHECK THE NUMBER OF SUNNIERS IN KASHMIR. THAT WILL MAKE A HOT STORY!
THE WRITERS' WORKSHOP.

ISLAM ARRIVED IN KASHMIR THROUGH THE SWORD. WE KASHMIRI PANDITS ARE THE INDIGENOUS KASHMIRIS— PURE GENES, TO BE MORE PRECISE.
THE KASHMIRI PANDIT
DON'T GO INTO POLITICS. READ ANIMAL FARM AND IMPROVE YOUR GRAMMAR.
THE AUTHOR.
WHEN I WAS A KID, WOMEN WOULD PIERCE THEIR NOSES, WHICH WORKED AS AN EXTRA VENTILATOR FOR THEIR BRAINS. BUT NOWADAYS THAT'S CONSIDERED AN ANCIENT PRACTICE. HENCE THEIR BRAINS ARE SUFFOCATED. THEY PLUCK THEIR EYEBROWS THE WAY WE'VE DEFORESTED OUR VALLEY.
THE SATIRIST.
JOURNALISTS AND LEADERS HERE CALL US IMMORAL AND A WASTE OF TIME. THEN THEY EXPECT BOLLYWOOD TO REPRESENT THE REALITY OF KASHMIR. FOR FUCK'S SAKE, ISN'T THAT HYPOCRISY?
THE MUSICIAN.
KASHMIR'S HISTORY, UNLIKE THE HISTORY OF OTHER NATIONS, HAS NOT BEEN STANDARDISED. DON'T EXPECT MOHAMED ZIINA TO RECITE HISTORY FOR YOU IN ONE BREATH. YOU'LL HEAR DIFFERENT STORIES FROM DIFFERENT PEOPLE. DON'T BE LAZY. YOU MUST READ OUR HISTORY FOR YOURSELF.
THE EX-MILITANT

FOOTNOTES

THOUSANDS OF YEARS AGO, THE KASHMIR VALLEY WAS A HIGH-ALTITUDE LAKE. INSIDE THE LAKE LIVED A DEMON THAT TERRORIZED THE INFANT SAINTS LIVING ON THE BANK.
THE DEMON WAS IMPERVIOUS TO THE WATER.
MANY YEARS LATER, AFTER A GREAT SHIVA-KASHYAPA HIGH-SOUGHT DIVINE HELP, A HOLE WAS PIERCED IN A MOUNTAIN AND ALL THE WATER FROM THE LAKE WAS DRAINED.
THE DEMON DIED AND KASHMIR BECAME KASHMIR.

OR PERHAPS IT WAS A DRAGON IN THE LAKE AND HE WAS IMPRESSED BY THE SPIRITUAL POWERS OF A BUDDHIST MONK WHO USED TO MEDITATE ON THE BANK OF THE LAKE.
THE DRAGON OFFERED THE MONK SOME SPACE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE LAKE TO MEDITATE.
THE MONK USED HIS SPIRITUAL POWERS TO INCREASE THE SIZE OF HIS BODY UNTIL HE BECAME AS BIG AS THE VALLEY ITSELF PRESSING UP THE LAKE AND PUSHING THE DRAGON AWAY.
THEN HE BROUGHT POOR SLAVES FROM THE OTHER LANDS AND SETTLED THEM IN THE VALLEY, AND THAT IS HOW KASHMIR WAS ESTABLISHED.

KASHMIR BECAME A HUB OF TRADE AND LEARNING ON THE SILK ROUTE...
NOTHING IS INDEPENDENT FROM THE PERCEPTION, AND PERCEPTION DEPENDS NOT FROM THE PERCEIVER. HENCE THE UNIVERSE IS NOTHING BUT THE PERCEIVER.
ICE, FROZEN WATER, AND SNOW ALL THESE HAVE BEEN CREATED BY GOD. THEY ALL APPEAR DIFFERENT BUT ARE OF THE SAME ESSENCE. WHEN THE RAYS OF THE SUN FALL UPON THEM, THEY ALL TURN INTO WATER.
SHEIKH NOOR-UD-DIN NOORANI.

... AND A COVETED LAND FOR INVADERS.
IF THERE IS A PARADISE ON EARTH... IT IS HERE!
MUGHALS
IT IS HERE!
AFGHANS
IT IS HERE!
SIKHS

IN 1846, THE BRITISH DEFEATED THE SIKHS WHO RULED KASHMIR AT THE TIME.
BUT BRITAIN FOUND KASHMIR TOO MOUNTAINOUS AND DIFFICULT TO OPERATE
SO THE BUSINESS-MINDED EAST INDIA COMPANY MAINTAINED THEIR CONTROL OVER KASHMIR BY SELLING IT TO THEIR COLLABORATOR, GULAB SINGH, WHO HAD HELPED THEM IN DEFEATING THE SIKHS.
KASHMIR WAS SOLD TO THE HINDU DOGRA MAHARAJA, COMPLETELY DISTRICT, FOR 7.5 MILLION RUPEES UNDER THE TREATY OF AMRITSAR

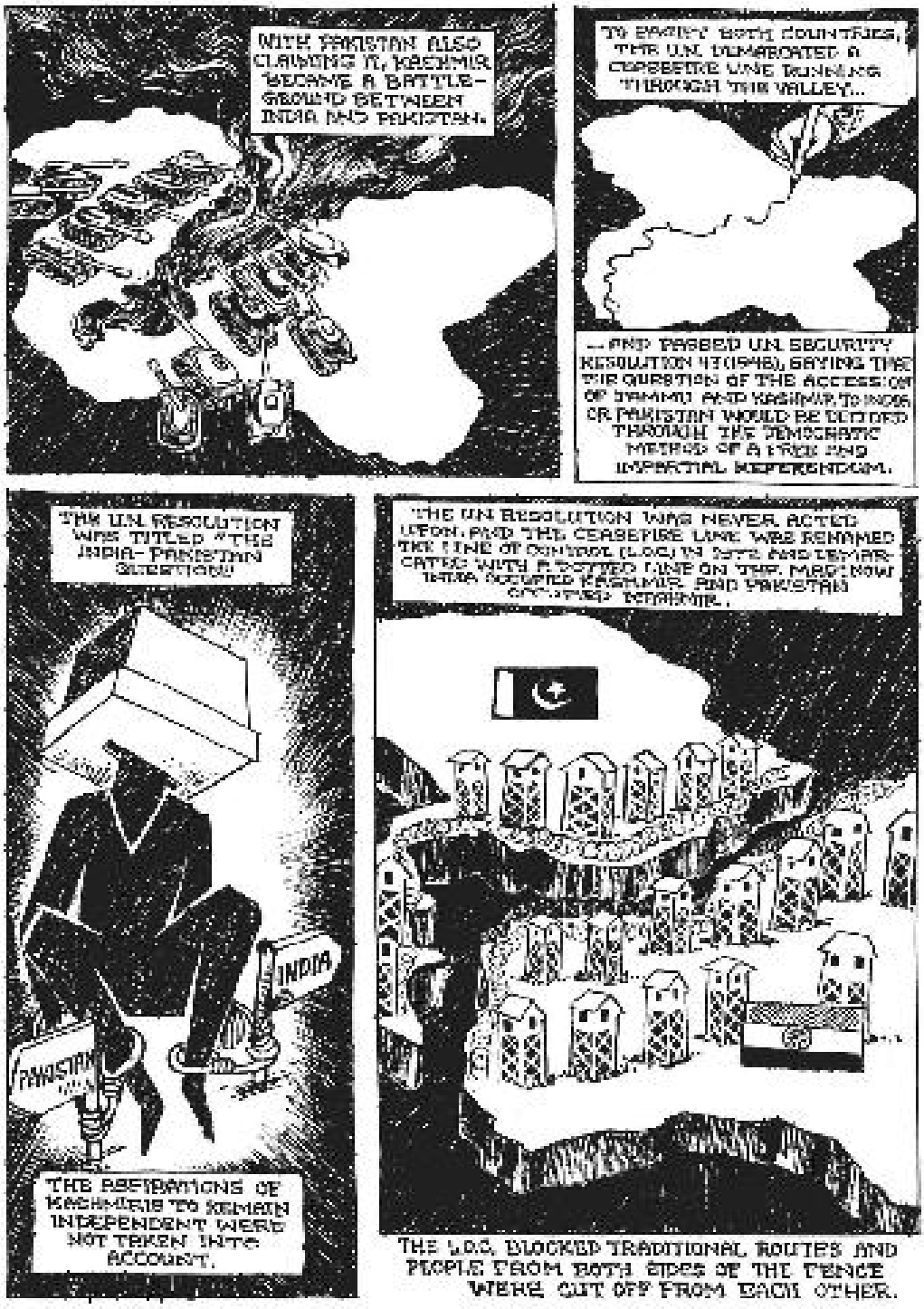
THE DOGRA MAHARAJA INTRODUCED HEAVY TAXES, FORCED LABOUR, SLAVERY AND SLAUGHTER, AND ROBBED KASHMIR OF ITS TREASURES.
BEING THE SAME WEALTH, HE PAID BRITAIN.
"MAHARAJA GULAB SINGH ACKNOWLEDGES THE SUPREMACY OF THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT AND WILL, IN TOKEN OF SUPREMACY PRESENT ANNUALLY TO THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT ONE HORSE, TWELVE PERFECT SHAWL GOATS OF APPROVED BREED (SIX MALE AND SIX FEMALE) AND THREE PAIRS OF CASHMERE SHAWLS"— ARTICLE X, TREATY OF AMRITSAR.

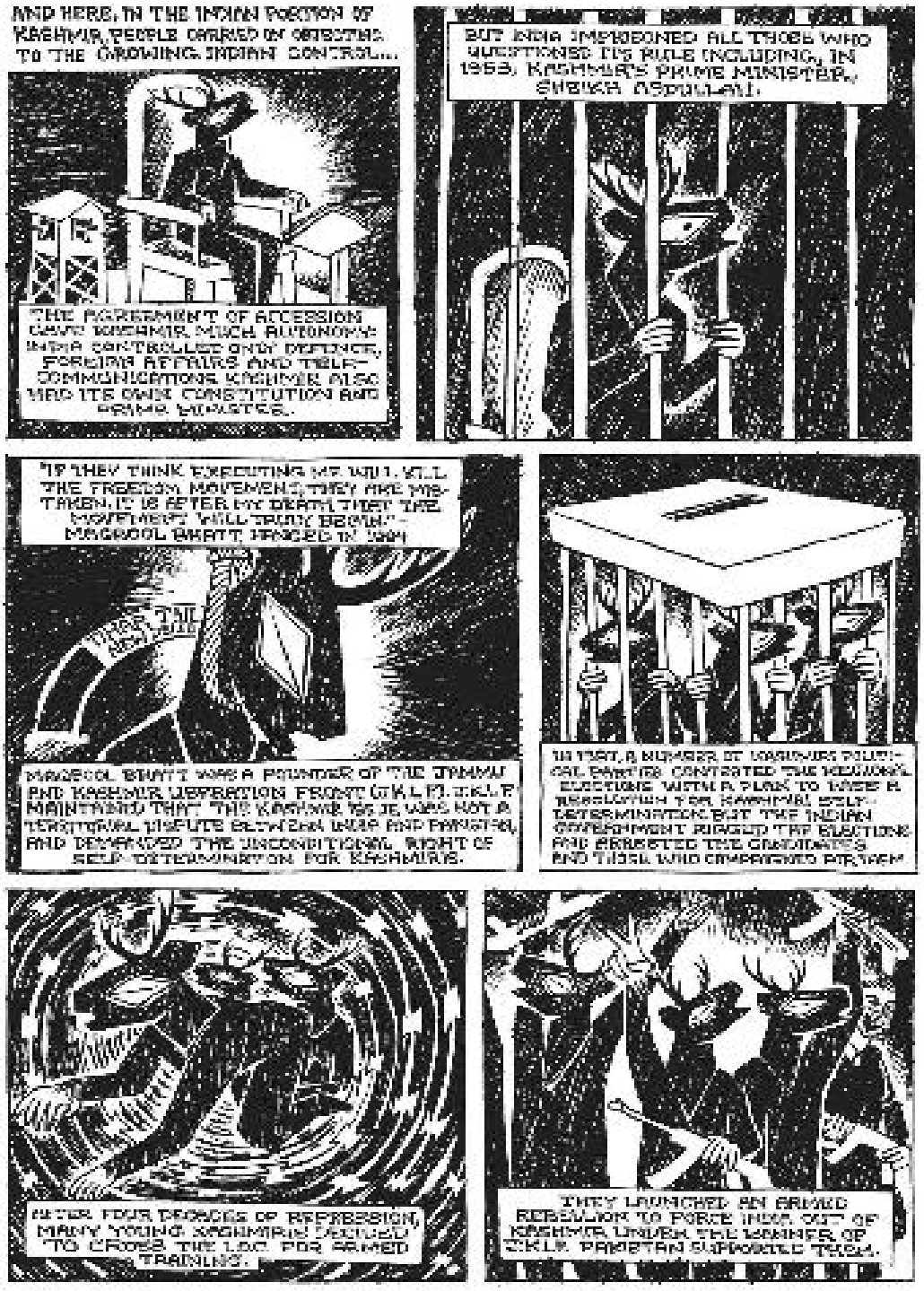
THE TREATY OF AMRITSAR MADE THE HEIRS OF THE DOGRA MAHARAJA FUTURE RULERS OF KASHMIR.
"FOR ENTIRELY SELFISH PURPOSES WE DELIBERATELY SOLD MILLIONS OF PEOPLE INTO THE ABSOLUTE POWER OF THE MEANEST, MOST AVARICIOUS, CRUEL AND UNPRINCIPLED OF MEN THAT EVER SAT UPON A THRONE"— ROBERT THORPE.
ROBERT THORPE, A BRITISH-KASHMIRI, WAS FOUND MURDERED IN 1960 AFTER RAISING HIS VOICE AGAINST THE DOGRA OPPRESSION IN KASHMIR.
AND EVERY TIME THE IMPOVERISHED KASHMIRIS RESISTED DOGRA RULE, THEY WERE GUNNED DOWN.

WITH WORLD WAR TWO COMING TO AN END AND THE PARTITION OF INDIA APPROACHING, KASHMIR SUBMITTED TO THE BRITISH PLAN OF CONSULTING ONLY THE MAHARAJA ON THE FUTURE OF KASHMIR BEFORE THEY LEFT INDIA.
KASHMIR
DURING THE PARTITION OF INDIA IN 1947 OVER ONE MILLION PEOPLE WERE KILLED IN THE ACCOMPANYING RIOTS ON ALL SIDES
PAKISTAN
INDIA
"THE REPRESENTATIVES OF KASHMIR SHOULD BE ABLE TO DECIDE THE FUTURE OF KASHMIR. A BALE DEED CANNOT ATTAIN THE STATUS OF 'TRENTY'" — QUIT KASHMIR MOVEMENT.
BUT BRITAIN IGNORED THE KASHMIRI MEMORANDUM.

THE KASHMIRIS REBELLED AGAINST DOGRA RULE ONCE MORE.
I APPEAL TO ALL OF YOU TO DONATE ONE RUPEE TOWARDS THE COLLECTION OF 7.5 MILLION RUPEES SO THAT WE CAN RETURN THE INVESTMENT OF THE MAHARAJA'S GRANDFATHER AND BUY BACK OUR INDEPENDENCE.
KASHMIRIS, NEITHER PART OF INDIA NOR PAKISTAN, BELIEVED THAT THEIR FREEDOM WAS JUST A MATTER OF TAKING CONTROL OF KASHMIR FROM THE DECLINING DOGRA DYNASTY.
BUT THE DOGRA RULER IMPRISONED ALL THE KASHMIRI LEADERS...
...AND OVERSAW THE SLAUGHTER OF OVER 200,000 MUSLIMS IN JAMMU. IN THE AFTERMATH OF PARTITION, AROUND 300,000 MUSLIMS FLED JAMMU AND SOUGHT REFUGE IN NEWLY CREATED PAKISTAN.

25 OCTOBER 1947
PROVOKED BY THE MASSACRE OF THEIR MUSLIM BRETHREN, TRIBESMEN FROM NORTHERN PAKISTAN, BACKED BY PAKISTAN, POURED INTO KASHMIR.
THE PANIC-STRICKEN MAHARAJA FLED KASHMIR FOR INDIA, AND SOUGHT INDIAN HELP TO REPEL THE INVADERS.
26 OCTOBER 1947.
AND INDIA ANNOUNCED THAT THE MAHARAJA HAD SIGNED THE ACCESSION OF KASHMIR TO INDIA.
ON 27 OCTOBER 1947, THE INDIAN ARMY LANDED IN KASHMIR.


WITH PAKISTAN ALSO CLAIMING IT, KASHMIR BECAME A BATTLE-GROUND BETWEEN INDIA AND PAKISTAN.
TO PACIFY BOTH COUNTRIES, THE U.N. DEMARCATED A CEASEFIRE LINE RUNNING THROUGH THE VALLEY...
...AND PASSED U.N. SECURITY RESOLUTION 47(1948), SAYING THAT THE QUESTION OF THE ACCESSION OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR TO INDIA OR PAKISTAN WOULD BE DECIDED THROUGH THE DEMOCRATIC METHOD OF A FREE AND IMPARTIAL REFERENDUM.
THE U.N. RESOLUTION WAS TITLED "THE INDIA-PAKISTAN QUESTION"
INDIA
PAKISTAN
THE ASPIRATIONS OF KASHMIRIS TO REMAIN INDEPENDENT WERE NOT TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT.
THE U.N. RESOLUTION WAS NEVER ACTED UPON. AND THE CEASEFIRE LINE WAS RENAMED THE LINE OF CONTROL (LOC) IN 1972 AND DEMARCATED WITH A DOTTED LINE ON THE MAP: NOW INDIA OCCUPIED KASHMIR AND PAKISTAN OCCUPIED KASHMIR.
THE LOC BLOCKED TRADITIONAL ROUTES AND PEOPLE FROM BOTH SIDES OF THE FENCE WERE CUT OFF FROM EACH OTHER.

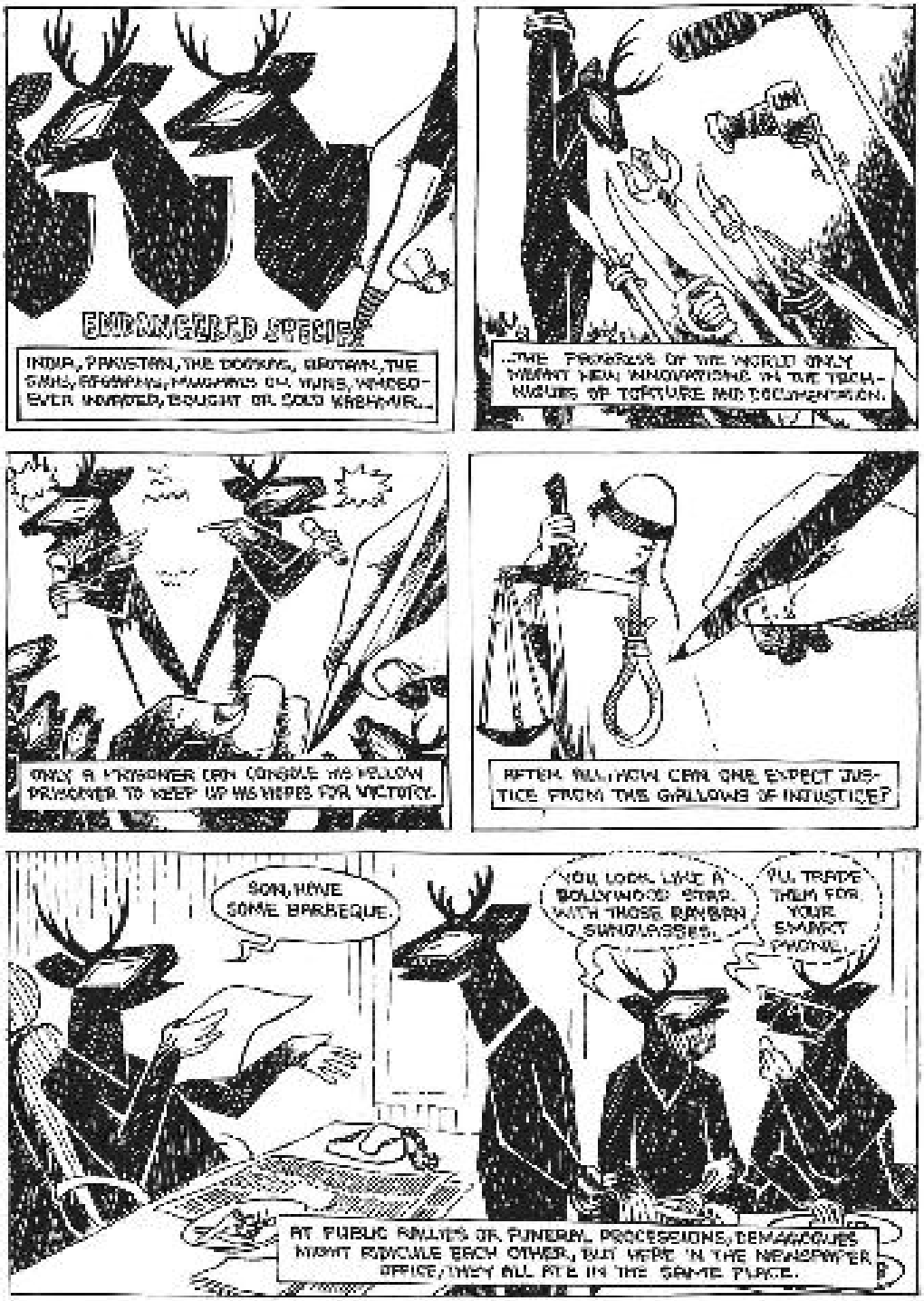

AND HERE, IN THE INDIAN PORTION OF KASHMIR, PEOPLE CARRIED ON OBJECTING TO THE GROWING INDIAN CONTROL...
THE AGREEMENT OF ACCESSION GAVE KASHMIR MUCH AUTONOMY: INDIA CONTROLLED ONLY DEFENCE, FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND TELE-COMMUNICATIONS. KASHMIR ALSO HELD ITS OWN CONSTITUTION AND PRIME MINISTER.
BUT INDIA IMPRISONED ALL THOSE WHO QUESTIONED ITS RULE INCLUDING, IN 1953, KASHMIR'S PRIME MINISTER, SHEIKH ABDULLAH.
"IF THEY THINK EXECUTING ME WILL KILL THE FREEDOM MOVEMENT, THEY ARE MISTAKEN. IT IS AFTER MY DEATH THAT THE MOVEMENT WILL TRULY BEGIN." - MAQBOOL BHATT, HANGED IN 1984
MAQBOOL BHATT WAS A FOUNDER OF THE JAMMU AND KASHMIR LIBERATION FRONT (J.K.L.F). J.K.L.F MAINTAINED THAT THE KASHMIR ISSUE WAS NOT A TERRITORIAL DISPUTE BETWEEN INDIA AND PAKISTAN, AND DEMANDED THE UNCONDITIONAL RIGHT OF SELF-DETERMINATION FOR KASHMIRIS.
IN 1987, A NUMBER OF VARIOUS POLITICAL PARTIES CONTESTED THE REGIONAL ELECTIONS WITH A PLAN TO MAKE A RESOLUTION FOR KASHMIRI SELF-DETERMINATION. BUT THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT RIGGED THE ELECTIONS AND ARRESTED THE CANDIDATES AND THOSE WHO CAMPAIGNED FOR THEM.
AFTER FOUR DECADES OF REPRESSION, MANY YOUNG KASHMIRIS CROSSED THE LOC FOR ARMED TRAINING.
THEY LAUNCHED AN ARMED REBELLION TO FORCE INDIA OUT OF KASHMIR UNDER THE BANNER OF J.K.L.F. PAKISTAN SUPPORTED THEM.

INDIA IMPOSED CENTRAL RULE AND THE ARMY TOOK OVER EVERY COUNCIL OF KASHMIR.
MILLIONS OF KASHMIRIS CAME OUT IN THE STREETS AND DEMANDED FREEDOM.
MANY MASSACRES OCCURRED.
EACH CORPSE MOTIVATED MOURNERS TO TAKE UP ARMS.
CURFEWS AND CRACKDOWNS BECAME ROUTINE.
OLD TOMBSTONES SHOW THE BLEND OF DIVERSE CULTURES FOR WHICH KASHMIR WAS ONCE KNOWN, AND THE MASTERY OF THE ARTISANS AND STONE-CARVERS OF THE VALLEY... BUT DUE TO THE NEED FOR MASS PRODUCTION, NOW MARBLE TILES WERE FRAMED IN IRON AND ERECTED ON THE GRAVES.
WE WANT PAKISTAN!
LET KASHMIRIS DECIDE THEIR OWN FUTURE!
ISLAM IS OUR BOND WITH PAKISTAN!
NO INDIA, NO PAKISTAN WE WANT INDEPENDENCE!
INDIA
THOUGH THE UPRISING WAS STARTED BY PRO-INDEPENDENCE GROUPS, IT WAS SOON RIDDLED WITH FACTIONS. MANY OF THESE GROUPS VIEWED ISLAM AS A NATURAL BAND BETWEEN KASHMIR AND PAKISTAN. SOME OUTFITS WERE ALSO DEPLOYED BY INDIA TO PURSUE THE INSURGENTS.

AT ANY POINT IN TIME PEOPLE LOST COUNT OF HOW MANY MILITANT GROUPS EXISTED.
THE MILITANTS KILLED A NUMBER OF PEOPLE, MOSTLY BANDITS AND POLITICAL ACTIVISTS, WHO THEY SUSPECTED OF COLLABORATING WITH INDIA. AND WITH THE GROWING RIVALRY BETWEEN THESE GROUPS, THEY STARTED GUNNING DOWN EACH OTHER AS WELL.
IN THE FOLLOWING YEARS...
MANY OF THE MILITANTS SURRENDERED. MANY WERE CONVERTED TO COUNTER-INSURGENCY GROUPS BY INDIA.
SOME PRO-PAKISTAN GROUPS ALONG WITH PAKISTANI MILITANTS CONTINUED FIGHTING.
IN 1993, THE RESISTANCE GROUPS UNITED AND FORMED AN UMBRELLA PARTY, ALL PARTY HURRIYAT CONFERENCE (APHC). THE GROUPS DECIDED TO SEEK A SOLUTION EITHER THROUGH A REFERENDUM WITH THREE OPTIONS – INDIA, PAKISTAN, INDEPENDENCE – OR THROUGH A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT THAT WAS BASED ON THE WILL OF THE PEOPLE.
WHAT THEY ACHIEVED WAS...
MUNNU, WHAT'S THIS? YOU'VE FAILED YOUR EXAMS!
DON'T WORRY, MAMMA. THE VICE-PRINCIPAL IS MY FRIEND. I HAVE TO ILLUSTRATE A BOTANY THESIS FOR HIS DAUGHTER, AND HE'LL PASS ME IN RETURN.
APHC

JOURNALISM AND A TICKET TO HOLLYWOOD

SOME THINKERS SAY THAT HISTORY IS A FICTION, OR THAT THE FATE OF EVERY LIVING OR NON-LIVING THING WAS SET IN STONE MILLIONS OR BILLIONS OF YEARS AGO BY THE ALMIGHTY. WHATEVER THE TRUTH, GOD AND THE VICTORIANS WERE CERTAINLY CRUEL FOR NOT ADDING A FEW PAGES OF HAPPY ENDING TO KASHMIR'S STORY.
KASHMIR LOOKS LESS LIKE A PARADISE OR A HOMELAND THAN A NEVER-ENDING PURGATORY WALLED IN THE TALL MOUNTAINS, BORDERS AND MINEFIELDS.
ONE COULD MOURN, ARGUE, COMPLAIN OR SEEK JUSTICE, BUT THE REPETITION OF THE SAME TRAGIC STORY GOT ONE USED TO DEATH AFTER DEATH. A SURVIVOR COULD ONLY BURY HIS GUILT BY CALLING THOSE WHO WERE NOT SO LUCKY "MARTYRS". NUMBNESS SWORE A LOT OF PAIN.
IDENTIFY THE MURDERER!
SHOULD ONE BLAME THE ARMY? AND SCIENCE PROGRESSED ENOUGH, ROBOTS WOULD HAVE REPLACED THEM.


ENDANGERED SPECIES
INDIA, PAKISTAN, THE DOGS, BRITAIN, THE SIKHS, BRAHMINS, MUGHALS OR HUNS, WHOEVER INVADED, FOUGHT OR SOLD KASHMIR...
...THE PROGRESS OF THE WORLD ONLY MEANT NEW INNOVATIONS IN THE TECHNIQUES OF TORTURE AND DOCUMENTATION.
ONLY A PRISONER CAN CONSOLE HIS FELLOW PRISONER TO KEEP UP HIS HOPES FOR VICTORY.
AFTER ALL, HOW CAN ONE EXPECT JUSTICE FROM THE GALLOWS OF INJUSTICE?
SON, HAVE SOME BARBEQUE.
YOU LOOK LIKE A BOLLYWOOD STAR WITH THOSE RAYBAN SUNGLASSES.
I'LL TRADE THEM FOR YOUR SMART PHONE.
AT PUBLIC RALLIES OR FUNERAL PROCESSIONS, DEMAGOGUES MIGHT RIDICULE EACH OTHER, BUT HERE IN THE NEWSPAPER OFFICE, THEY ALL ATE IN THE SAME PLACE.

I LIKE THIS CARTOON, BUT A JUDGE MIGHT SMELL CONTEMPT.
BUT MR. PEOPLE NEVER GET JUSTICE HERE.
I KNOW, SAMB BUT YOU HAVE A WHOLE LIFE AHEAD OF YOU. AS FOR ME, I'VE BEEN SUED DOZENS OF TIMES- ONE MORE LAWSUIT WOULD HARDLY MAKE ANY DIFFERENCE!
THAT'S TRUE.
WHERE'S THE EDITOR? I NEED TO SHOW HIM THE NEW CARTOON.
SHOW IT TO THE SUB-EDITORS UPSTAIRS.
OHH... AWA... LIKE THIS... OH YEAH... BABY...
YEAHAH...
YOU THINK THIS CARTOON IS OKAY, SIR?

CAN I GET A LIFT, PLEASE?
SURE.
THANKS, SADIA.
YOU KNOW MY NAME!
OF COURSE, I'M A FOLLOWER OF THE RESISTANCE. I LOVE YOUR CARTOONS, AND I ALSO KNOW THAT SOMETIMES YOU GET CARRIED AWAY WITH THE INDIAN PROPAGANDA.
REPLICA? WOULD YOU PLEASE GIVE ME AN EXAMPLE?
YOU DREW SEVERAL CARTOONS RECENTLY THAT DEMEAN OUR CAUSE!
YOU MEAN THE ONES I DREW ABOUT THE LACK OF CO-ORDINATION BETWEEN THE RESISTANCE GROUPS?
INDIA INVITES US FOR TALKS IN DELHI ON CONDITION THAT OUR NEGOTIATIONS FALL WITHIN THE BOUNDS OF THE INDIAN CONSTITUTION, BUT ACTUALLY THEY WANT TO SEND A MESSAGE TO THE WORLD THAT KASHMIR IS THEIR INTERNAL AFFAIR AND THEY'RE WORKING FOR PEACE.
ASK YOURSELF – WHY DOESN'T INDIA INCLUDE US IN THE INDO-PAK TALKS? THEY REFUSE TO ACCEPT KASHMIR AS AN INTERNATIONAL DISPUTE!

IT IS AN EYEWASH! WE HAVE TO RESIST WHEN AN ELEMENT IN THE RESISTANCE CAMP ACCEPTS INSIDE OFFER OF TRUCE, AND THAT NATURALLY CAUSES A RIFT.
AND YOUR FALLS APART, RIGHT?
I'M SURE THERE ARE SEVERAL OTHER REASONS FOR YOU TO DESPISE EACH OTHER AS WELL...
...TO CALL EACH OTHER TRAITORS AND SELL OUTS, AND MAKE YOUR FOLLOWERS HATE EACH OTHER. INDIA LOVES THAT MORE THAN YOUR WILLINGNESS TO VISIT DELHI AND THAT MAKES YOU CLOWNS ENTERTAINING TO INDIA, DOESN'T IT?
STOP HERE!
I THOUGHT YOU WERE OUR COMRADE AND IT WAS BETTER TO ASK YOU TO REFRAIN FROM DRAWING SUCH NASTY CARTOONS.
OR, WHAT'S THIS WHY YOU ASKED FOR A LIFT? NEXT TIME YOU'D BETTER TALK TO THE EDITOR DIRECTLY. HE'S THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE NEWSPAPER.
WELL, WE KNOW WHERE TO FIND YOU— THAT SHOULD SUFFICE.

DID HE MEAN THAT?
WHO KNOWS? YOU SHOULD APOLOGIZE.
HELL, THOSE CHICKEN FATTY REVOLUTIONARIES DON'T DESERVE MY APOLOGY!
BUT HE KNOWS WHERE TO FIND ME!
DAMN, I'M SO STUPID! I SHOULD HAVE KEPT MY MOUTH SHUT! I SHOULD HAVE APOLOGIZED.
BUT THERE MUST BE A WAY OUT OF THIS.
WHY DON'T YOU PLEASE THEM IN TOMORROW'S CARTOON?
AROUND HALF A MILLION ARMED FORCES AGAINST THESE HELPLESS LEADERS, WHAT KIND OF BATTLE IS IT? IT'S AN OCCUPATION. IT'S A PRISON.
LILIPUT
BRILLIANT CARTOON!

AND LIFE WAS STILL YOUNG.. EVERY EMOTION MORED TO SAYING TIME.
BITCH! YOU'RE A STAR. NOW! SOMEONE FROM DELHI WANTS TO TALK TO YOU.
HEY, SACCO! I THOUGHT YOU'D BE 40 OR SOMETHING. I JUST READ YOUR PROFILE IN THE NEWSPAPER.. CONGRATS! I LOVE YOUR CARTOONS. I'D LIKE TO INTERVIEW YOU FOR A MAGAZINE HERE.
YOU SOUND LIKE A KASHMIRI.
YES, I'M A KASHMIRI. CALL ME YOUR BROTHER, PLEASE.
THANKS BROTHER.
DO YOU KNOW JOE SACCO?
WHO?
HE'S A GRAPHIC NOVELIST.
WHAT'S A GRAPHIC NOVEL?
IT MEANS A NON-FICTION COMIC.
NON-FICTION COMIC?
NEVER MIND, I'M COMING TO KASHMIR NEXT WEEK AND I'LL BRING SOME OF HIS BOOKS WITH ME.
BROTHER FULFILLED HIS PROMISE.
THANKS A LOT! THEY DON'T HAVE THIS STUFF IN THE BOOKSTORES HERE.
YOU'RE MY YOUNGER BROTHER, DON'T SAY THANKS. JUST READ THIS BOOK 20 TIMES.
THE FIXER

THERE ARE GRAPHIC NOVELS ABOUT EVERY CONFLICT ZONE EXCEPT KASHMIR.
DO YOU SEE HIS LINES? I THINK HE PAINTS IT UNDER A MICROSCOPE. SUCH DETAILS!
WHY SHOULD I PUT MYSELF IN HIS SHOES?
IT'S A FIGURE OF SPEECH—IT MEANS HE'S GOING TO TELL A STORY.
WOW, LOOK AT THE BARBED WIRE AND THE ARMY IN HIS BOOK. HIS EYES ARE SHARPER THAN A CAMERA.
I KNOW YOU'D LIKE THIS. I WANT YOU TO MAKE ONE ABOUT KASHMIR.
UNFORTUNATELY, THE CHARACTERS IN THIS BOOK LOOK AS IF THEY'RE BORN TO SUFFER. EVEN WHEN THEY'RE SMILING, THEY LOOK LIKE THEY'RE CRYING.
I WANT THE WORLD TO KNOW ABOUT KASHMIR.
YOU MEAN BRITISH PEOPLE DON'T KNOW THAT THEIR GOVERNMENT SOLD EACH KASHMIRI FOR 2.5 RUPEES?
AND WHEN INDIA AND PAKISTAN BUY AMMUNITION AND F-16s FROM AMERICA, YOU THINK THE U.S. GOVERNMENT BELIEVES THAT INDIA AND PAKISTAN ARE GOING TO CELEBRATE EID OR DIWALI WITH THOSE WEAPONS?
HAHA, THE U.S. GIVES THESE WAR TOYS OR AID WITH ONE HAND AND TAKES IT BACK FROM THEM, IN RETURN FOR MORE ARMS WITH THE OTHER. BUT ACTUALLY I THINK IT'S THE ORDINARY PEOPLE OF KASHMIR WHO NEED TO KNOW ABOUT KASHMIR.
CALM DOWN, BRAND. POLITICS ALWAYS WORKS LIKE THAT.

AND CHECK THIS OUT! JOE SACCO SHOWS SOMEONE GROPING A WOMAN'S BREAST! I CAN'T EVEN UTTER THE WORD SEX IN MY CARTOONS, EVEN THOUGH SEX SCANDALS ARE EVERYWHERE.
YOU KNOW THAT HUNDREDS OF GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN ARE BEING DRUGGED AND FILMED NAKED? THEN BLACKMAILED TO SERVE TOP MINISTERS AND BUREAUCRATS AS SEX SLAVES?
YES, I KNOW. LISTEN, STOP.
BUT DO YOU KNOW THAT INSTEAD OF EXPOSING THESE PREDATORS, PEOPLE WERE ARE CIRCULATING THE LIST WITH THE NAMES AND ADDRESSES OF THE POOR WOMEN, CALLING THEM WHORES?
LISTEN, LISTEN. STOP THIS!
AND RAPE VICTIMS? THEY'RE FUCKED TWICE – FIRST BY THE OCCUPATIONAL FORCES AND THEN BY OUR SOCIAL TABOOS AND HYPOCRISY.
OUR INTELLECTUALS NEVER GET BACK OF MONTHS BUT FLOWS IN OUR COMMUNITY, THEN THEY SAY THEY'RE SICK OF THIS CORRUPT SOCIETY AND POLITICS. AND WHEN IT STARTS GETTING COLD HERE IN THE WINTER, THEY CALL IT GLOOMY AND SAY THAT THEY DESERVE BETTER.
THEN THEY LEAVE FOR DELHI. BUT WHEN IT STARTS GETTING UNBEARABLY HOT IN DELHI IN THE SUMMER, THOSE SUNNY WEATHER INTELLECTUALS COME BACK TO KASHMIR AND RESUME THEIR RHETORIC.
BUT WHETHER IT'S 37 DEGREES OR -30 DEGREES HERE, YOU'LL ALWAYS SEE THE INDIAN ARMY TIRELESSLY KEEPING WATCH ON THE STREETS!

SAGRAD, HERE, HAVE SOME WATER. YOU HAVE A WHOLE LIFE AHEAD OF YOU. DON'T GET STUCK IN POLITICS.
I'M NOT STUCK, BRO. I'M NOT STUCK.
YOU DON'T HAVE TO COMMENT ON POLITICS. JUST WRITE ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCES OF GROWING UP HERE.
MY ENGLISH SUCKS AND I CAN'T READ OR WRITE KASHMIRI. THANKS TO OUR TEACHERS NOWILLENGO US. THEY PROHIBITED KASHMIRI IN OUR SCHOOL, FORCED US TO SPEAK IN URDU AND MADE US WRITE IN ENGLISH. NOW I'M A DICK OF ALL TRADES.
WRITE IN ANY LANGUAGE. I'LL EDIT IT.
I JUST WANT TO MATURE AS A POLITICAL CARTOONIST AND GET MY WORK PUBLISHED IN THE NEW YORKER. SAC REPORTERS SAY THAT NEW YORKER CARTOONS ARE THE BEST AND THE ENTIRE WORLD SEES THEM.
YOU SHOULD MAKE A GRAPHIC NOVEL ABOUT CHRISTMAS KILLINGS AND PAKS OWN BATTLES. AND UP YOU OWN SOMEHOW RELATE THOSE STORIES TO YOUR OWN EXPERIENCES. PUBLISHERS WILL LOVE IT.
BUT HOW? MY FAMILY MANAGED TO STAY SAFE IN THE WORST FIGHTING OF THE 90S. I MIGHT HAVE TO INTERVIEW SOME ACTUAL VICTIMS.
BUT THE INTRO SHOULD BE FROM YOUR EXPERIENCE, AT LEAST. YOU MUST HAVE SEEN SOMETHING?
LET ME THINK.
YOU KNOW, I MADE A CARTOON ABOUT THE ARMED FORCES A FEW YEARS BACK. THEY RAIDED MY OFFICE.
IT HAS TO BE SOMETHING ABOUT PAKS OWN BATTLES OR CUSTODIAL KILLINGS. THAT WOULD BE EASY TO PITCH TO PUBLISHERS.
LET ME THINK.
HERE'S THE DEAL, THEN. WE'LL WRITE ABOUT KASHMIRI HISTORY—HOW IT WAS SOLD, THEN THE DOGRAS AND FINALLY THE INDIAN FUCKERS. CRACKDOWNS. CURFEWS. MASSACRES...
TOO MANY DWARFS. BE MORE PRECISE.

LET ME THINK.
LOOK, THIS MIGHT SOUND FUNNY BUT IT HAPPENED A FEW WEEKS AGO. I WAS DRIVING HOME FROM MY OFFICE ON MY BROTHER'S BIKE. THE ARMY IN LIVCHOWK STOPPED ME. SOMEONE HAD DETONATED A GRENADE IN THE CITY CENTRE EARLIER THAT DAY.
AND THEN?
"THE STREETS WERE TOTALLY EMPTY BUT THE ARMY WAS EVERYWHERE!"
SO YOU'RE THE CARTOONIST FOR G.K.! HOW OLD ARE YOU?
18.
"AND THIS SOLDIER ASKED FOR MY IDENTITY CARD!"
HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN WORKING WITH G.K.?
AROUND 4 YEARS.
PLEASE! PLEASE!
"THEY THOUGHT I WAS TOO YOUNG TO BE A CARTOONIST."
TRUST ME, SIR, I'M A CARTOONIST. YOU CAN CALL G.K. AND CONFIRM IT. PLEASE!
OUR OFFICER WOULD LIKE TO SEE YOU IN THE BUNKER...
"SO THEY TOOK THE KEYS OF MY BIKE AND DRAGGED ME TOWARDS THEIR BUNKER..."

"I THOUGHT IT WAS THE END TO MY STORY... I BLOCK WITH FEAR."
WAIT, WAIT! PLEASE, WAIT! I CAN PROVE MY IDENTITY.
BELIEVE ME, I'M A CARTOONIST.
BEFORE THEY BUNDLED ME INTO THE SHANTY, I MANAGED A PEN FROM MY BAG...IN THAT FLEETING, PANIC-STRICKEN MOMENT, ONLY GOD KNOWS HOW! I GOT THE IDEA!
ISN'T THIS YOUR PRIME MINISTER, MANMOHAN SINGH?
HEHH! WOULD YOU DRAW MY CARTOON AS WELL?
SORRY, SIR. MY MOTHER MUST BE FREAKING OUT BY NOW. I'M LATE.
AND THEY LET ME GO!
YAY! THAT'S YOUR TICKET TO HOLLYWOOD. WE CAN BRIDGE THIS STORY TO THAT OF OTHER VICTIMS WHO COULDN'T PROVE THEIR IDENTITY AND ENDED UP BEING KILLED IN FAKE CHAN BATTLES.
YAY!
WITH THAT STORY, YOU MIGHT EVEN GET ADMISSION TO COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY. BUT THE PART WHERE THEY ASK YOU TO DRAW THEIR CARICATURE WON'T BE NECESSARY.
AS YOU WISH. I LOVE YOU.

LET ME INTERVIEW SOME VICTIMS, I'LL SHOW YOU THE DRAFT LATER. WILL YOU FIX IT?
OF COURSE, BUT MAKE SURE YOU WRITE THAT BOOK COVER TO COVER.
THE LIST OF THE VICTIMS WAS VERY LONG. THEIR HEART-WRENCHING STORIES SEEMED LIKE STEPPING STONES TO HOLLYWOOD THAT DAY.
THE FIRST VICTIM LIVED 5 1/2 HOUR DRIVE SOUTH OF SRINAGAR.
PUT YOURSELF IN MY SIZE-13 SHOES.
THE VILLAGE IN SOUTH KASHMIR WAS COLDER THAN THE CITY AND LOOKED LIKE ONE OF THOSE IDYLLIC SCENES YOU FIND ON POSTCARDS.
ONE OF HER SONS HAD BEEN MISSING FOR YEARS AFTER THE ARMY ARRESTED HIM.
HER OTHER SONS WERE REBELS, SO THEY WERE SLAIN BY THE ARMY. SHE HAD MANY WRINKLES ALL OVER HER FACE.
NO, NO, THAT ONE'S DEAD. HERE, THIS ONE'S MISSING...
SHE HAD MANY GRANDCHILDREN.

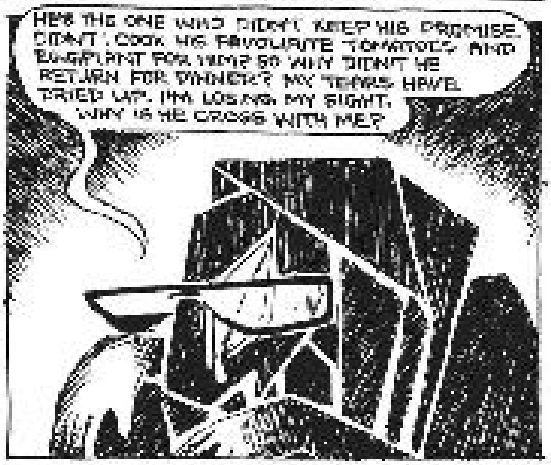
THAT'S ME IN HIS LAP.
NO, THAT'S ME IN HIS LAP. DAD LOVED ME MORE.
GO PLAY SOMEWHERE ELSE. LET HIM SEE THE PICTURE! HE'S GOING TO FIND YOUR DADDY... SO AS I WAS SAYING, THEN THE ARMY BEAT UP MY SICK HUSBAND AND TORCHED OUR HOUSE. BUT MY DAUGHTER-IN-LAW, THAT BITCH...
SHE HAD MANY STORIES, BUT THAT IS ALL SAMMY COULD REMEMBER FROM THE FIRST INTERVIEW.
THE SECOND VICTIM'S HOME WAS IN SRINAGAR'S OLD CITY, AND IT WAS LOCKED.
WHICH WASN'T A BIG DISAPPOINTMENT. THERE WERE PLENTY OF OTHER VICTIMS ON SAMMY'S LIST, AND ALL OF THEM LIVED IN THE OLD CITY, A STONE'S THROW FROM EACH OTHER.

THE THIRD PERSON ON THE LIST WAS HOME.

THOUGH SHE OPENED HER DOOR FOR SAERO, SHE ALMOST DIDN'T NOTICE HIM. JUST LIKE SHE DIDN'T NOTICE THE WIDE CRACKS IN THE WALLS, THE RUST ON THE DOOR HOOK, OR THE CANOPY OF SPIDER WEBS AND MOSS THAT HAD TURNED THE WALLS OF HER HOUSE GREY, GREEN AND PURPLE.

THERE'S NOT AN INCH WHERE I HAVEN'T LOOKED FOR MY SON. HOSPITALS. ARMY CAMPS. POLICE STATIONS. TORTURE CELLS. EMPTY ALLEYS. CROWDED STREETS. SHRINES. TEMPLES. MOSQUES. MOUNTAINS. RUINS....

IS HE DEAD? MAYBE! BUT THEN I THINK: WHY IS MY HEART STILL BEATING? WHAT IF HE'S IN PAIN? WHO WILL COOK FOR HIM?


HER THE ONE WHO DIDN'T KEEP HIS PROMISE. DIDN'T COOK HIS FAVOURITE TOMATOES AND EGGPLANT FOR HIM? SO WHY DIDN'T HE RETURN FOR DINNER? MY TEARS HAVE DRIED UP. I'M LOSING MY SIGHT. WHY IS HE CROSS WITH ME?

HER PEOPLE AFRAID OF DEATH? I'M SHOULDERING MY OWN DEAD BODY. IT'S BEEN SIXTEEN YEARS NOW. AND HE NEVER SHOWED UP. BECAUSE HE DIDN'T CARE FOR HIS MOTHER. HOW LONG DO I HAVE TO WAIT FOR HIM TO COME BACK AND SHOULDER MY BODY?
WHICH RAWN OF MINE HAS LURED YOU AWAY FROM HER? WHY ARE YOU CROSS WITH ME? FORGET THE ANGER AND SULKINESS! YOU'RE MY ONLY LOVE. I KEEP MY DOORS OPEN HALF THE NIGHT, COME AND ENTER MY DOOR, MY JEWEL. WHY ARE YOU CROSS WITH ME? I'VE SOUGHT YOU OVER HILLS AND DALES! I'VE COOKED DAINTY DISHES FOR YOU, TOO. ALL THIS IN VAIN—WHY ARE YOU CROSS WITH ME?
SHE WAS A STATUE OF ANGER. HOW COULD HE UNSETTLE HER WITH QUESTIONS? SHE WOULD HAVE SHARED A FEW WORDS OF COMPASSION, BUT HER GRIEF WAS INCONCEIVABLE. HE WAS UNSURE WHETHER TO WISH HER LONG LIFE IN CASE HER SON CAME BACK, OR A QUICK DEATH.
HEY, BROTHER, I DON'T LIKE JOURNALISM. I DON'T WANT TO INTERVIEW PEOPLE. IT'S CRUEL.
WHAT? YOU DON'T WANT TO BECOME ONE SAINT?
YOU KNOW OUR STORIES WON'T CHANGE ANYTHING FOR THESE PEOPLE. THEY NEED OUR COMPASSION, NOT QUESTIONS. WE'RE JUST RUBBING SALT IN THEIR WOUNDS AND TOYING WITH THEIR EMOTIONS BY GIVING THEM A FAKE HOPE THAT SOMEONE WILL COME AND RESCUE THEM AFTER READING THEIR STORIES.

YOU'VE ONLY JUST STARTED AND YOU ALREADY DISLIKE JOURNALISM?
I'LL SHOW YOU HOW AN INTERVIEW IS DONE. COME WITH ME TOMORROW.
AND SKORO FOLLOWED BROTHER LIKE A SHEEP.
EXCUSE ME, WHERE'S REHMANN'S HOUSE?
THE ONE WHO WAS KILLED IN THE FAKE GUN BATTLE?
OVER THERE, I GUESS. I SEE THE MEDIA THERE EVERY DAY.
REHMANN'S VILLAGE WAS AROUND 4 HOURS' DRIVE SOUTH OF BRUNSGAR.
KNOCK KNOCK
SON, REHMANN'S FATHER LEFT FOR SKONSGAR TO ATTEND THE COURT HEARING.
CAN WE SPEAK TO REHMANN'S WIFE?
SHE'S A POOR WIDOW NOW. SHE WORKS AS A CLEANER IN A SCHOOL. YOU CAN TALK TO ME, I'M REHMANN'S MOTHER.
YOU STAY QUIET, SKORO.

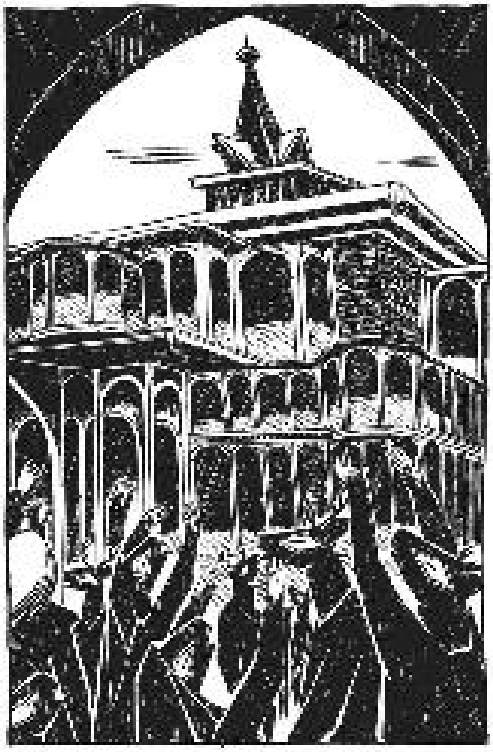
WHERE?
NOW?
WHERE?
WHICH?
WHAT?
WHY?
MY SON...
FACE OF BATTLE...
REMEMBER MY SON...
POLICE...
IRAN...
PROBE...
DNA...
COURT...
ANGLE... WHITE BALANCE... SHUTTER SPEED... FLASH... LIGHT...
CLICK
CLICK
WHILE SAUTHER NOTED DOWN ALL THE SAME/CONT DETAILS LEADING TO THE DEATH OF HER SON, SAFARI CAPTURED ALL THE POSSIBLE CLOSE-UPS OF HER WAILING EXPRESSION FOR THE PANELS OF HIS GRAPHIC NOVEL.
HERE'S MY DADDY!
SAFARI, STOP BEING SO CRUEL WITH THAT CAMERA!
ANGLE... WHITE BALANCE... FLASH... APERTURE...
LATER, REHMAN'S SON LED THEM TO HIS FATHER'S GRAVE.

OUR STORY IS ALMOST READY, BUT THE WORDS OF REHMANN'S FATHER ARE AN IMPORTANT PIECE OF THE PUZZLE.
EXHAUSTED AFTER THEIR DAY'S WORK, THEY HAD TEA BEFORE HEADING BACK TO ERFURSAN.
FINALLY THEY TRACKED DOWN REHMANN'S FATHER, AT THE LOCAL COURT.
THEY SAT IN A FILTHY CANTEEN. HE WAS A BAG OF BONES, AS IF EXHUMED FROM THE GRAVE TO ATTEND THE HEARING AT THE COURT. HIS EYES WERE DULL. ABANDONED CRUMBS AND WHITE FOAM HAD ACCUMULATED AT THE CORNER OF HIS MOUTH. HIS SUNKEN CHEEKS. A WAITER PLACED THREE CUPS OF TEA AND SOME CHICKEN PATTIES ON THE TABLE.
I DIDN'T KNOW MY SON WAS DEAD. I KEPT HOPING THAT HE'D RETURN.
HIS PHONE WAS SWITCHED OFF FOR SEVERAL MONTHS. I LOOKED FOR HIM EVERYWHERE.

HIS FRIEND FEROOZ, WHO WORKED FOR THE POLICE, HAD PROMISED HIM A GOVERNMENT JOB. FEROOZ HAD TAKEN ALL MY SON'S SAVINGS ON THE PRETEXT OF BRIBING THE RIGHT GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS.
"BUT HE HAD OTHER PLANS. HE TOOK REHMAN TO THE POLICE, WHO WERE DESPERATE TO WIN PROMOTIONS AND REWARDS."
"FROM THERE, THE POLICEMEN TOOK MY SON TO WAZIRIA VILLAGE, SHOT HIM DEAD AND MUTILATED HIS FACE WITH BULLETS."
"LATER, THE POLICE REFERRED TO MY SON AS KHAZ, A FOREIGN TERRORIST, IN THEIR PRESS CONFERENCES AND BRAGGED ABOUT THEIR BRAVERY IN ELIMINATING A DANGEROUS TERRORIST."
"THEY EARNED THEMSELVES A MEDAL AND A CASH REWARD OF 120,000 INDIAN RUPEES."

I DON'T QUITE BELIEVE THIS DRAMATIC STORY OF THE POLICE WHO WERE INVESTIGATING THE WHEREABOUTS OF MY SON.
THAT CAN'T BE TRUE! GOD, THE GUARDIAN OF THE UNIVERSE, THE MAGNIFICENT, AND MOST MERCIFUL MUST HAVE PROTECTED MY SON!
KEEP LOOKING FOR HIM! IF YOU BRING MY SON BACK, I'LL GIVE YOU 20,000 INDIAN RUPEES.
REHMAAANOOOO! THAT'S MY SON!
BUT WHEN THE BODY OF HAFIZ, THE FOREIGN TERRORIST WAS EXHUMED, THE OLD MAN FOUND HIS SON AND CUDDLED HIS REMAINS WHILE EVERYONE WORE MASKS TO AVOID THE PUNGENT SMELL.
THE GOVERNMENT OF KASHMIR THEN PAID 100,000 INDIAN RUPEES AS BLOOD MONEY TO REHMAN'S FATHER WHILE HIS WIDOW WAS GIVEN A JOB AS A CLEANER IN A LOCAL SCHOOL AT 600 INDIAN RUPEES PER MONTH.
BILL, PLEASE.

200 RUPEES.
THREE CUPS OF TEA AND A FEW CHICKEN PATTIES COST ONE-THIRD OF THE MONTHLY SALARY OF KUMPAN'S MIRUNA...
... AND THE OLD MAN PLACED THE AMOUNT ON THE TABLE.
I'VE GOT IT. YOU DON'T HAVE TO.
THE THOUGHT OF WHERE THOSE 200 RUPEES CAME FROM BEFORE THEY LEFT THE OLD MAN'S VEINY HANDS MADE THE CHICKEN PATTIES HARD TO DIGEST.



PAISLEY

WHEN ROLLING A SENIOR STUDENT AT SCHOOL, HE HAD TO READ THE NEWS ALOUD ONCE A WEEK BEFORE THE MORNING ASSEMBLY. HE NEVER READ THE NEWSPAPER AT HOME, THOUGH.
10 KILLED IN SOUTH KASHMIR, INCLUDING 3 MILITANTS AND 5 CIVILIANS. "KASHMIR A FLASHPOINT"—BILL CLINTON.
HE MADE IT UP. HE PICKED SCRAPS OF NEWSPAPER FROM THE ROADSIDE ON HIS WAY TO SCHOOL, BLEW THE LAYER OF DIRT FROM THEM AND READ THEM ALOUD TO THE OTHER STUDENTS.
IF ONLY IT WERE POSSIBLE IN REAL LIFE, BRAND WOULD PICK A DAY FROM THE PAST AND REPLACE THE CURRENT DAY WITHOUT HAVING TO WAKE UP.

THE GREY COLD MORNINGS OF JANUARY 2008 BECAME A DREADFUL HARBINGER OF THE HOPELESS FUTURE.
THE DAILY NEWS, EDITORIALS, OPINIONS OF INTELLECTUALS AND JOURNALISTS AND CARTOONS HARDLY BOTHERED THE COW DUNG ON THE SNOW IN THE STREETS OF KASHMIR.
DRAWING ONE MORE CARTOON WAS LIKE SCRATCHING A NEW MARK OVER AN OLD ONE ON THE WALLS OF A COLD PRISON CELL.
AND MAMMA LOOKED OLD. SHE WASN'T OLD, THOUGH—SHE JUST SMILED MORE OFTEN AND THE DARK CIRCLES AROUND HER SUNKEN EYES MADE SMILING WORRY.

SNOW REPLACED THE BARRICADES AND TURNED THE VALLEY INTO A DESOLATE WASTELAND
O.K. IS CLOSED TODAY.
SNOW! SNOW AND SNOW! ITS SICKENING. THERE WAN'T EVEN A MINE BLOST TO REPORT ABOUT!
YEAH, IT'S DEAD. I MIGHT JUST JOIN AN N.G.O. GOT A LIGHTS?
I MIGHT JUST MOVE TO DELHI TILL THE SNOW MELTS HERE.

MAMMA REFILLED THE TWO POTS WITH CHARCOAL IN THE EVENING...
MUNNU, MAKE SURE YOU DON'T SPILL BURNING CHARCOAL ON THE MATTRESS. YOU'LL BURN YOURSELF! TAKE OUT THE FIRE POT BEFORE YOU FALL ASLEEP. ARE YOU LISTENING?
YES, YES, I PROMISE.
MUNNU, PLEASE BLOW THE CANDLE OUT!
MAMMA
DOG OF TITHIWAL
MUNNU WAS SIX, WALKING ON THE BANK OF THE NOW DRIED-UP RIVER, THE LAMB, HOLDING MAMMA'S HAND.

MAMMA, IT'S SCARY HERE. LET'S NOT WALK FURTHER. MAMMA, PLEASE.
THE UM WAS DRAPED WITH A THICK CLOUD OF GREY SMOKE. THERE WERE NO PEOPLE AROUND, ONLY MAMMA AND MUNNU. SHE LOOKED OLD AND FRAIL.
SHE WAS WEARING A THICK PASHMINA SHAWL AS IF IT WAS WINTER. CRACKED DRY MUD HAD REPLACED THE RIVER.
MAMMA, WHERE ARE YOU GOING? LET'S GO BACK.
A COUPLE OF SILHOUETTES BECAME VISIBLE FURTHER DOWN THE PATH. GARBAGE PICKERS, PERHAPS.
MAMMA, PLEASE.
AS IF MAMMA WAS BLIND AND DEAF, SHE IGNORED MUNNU. AND THOSE SILHOUETTES, NOW NOT VERY FAR AWAY, WERE DUMPING CORPSES IN THE DRIED UP RIVER.

THICK TRANSLUCENT FLUID WAS LEAKING FROM THE CORPSES AT THE BOTTOM OF THE PILE, WHILE THE BODIES ON THE TOP WERE FRESH.

MMMMM! LOOK AT THAT! SOMEONE LIVES THERE. SHE'S BEAUTIFUL! I WANT TO SEE HER. THERE'S NOTHING ELSE LEFT HERE.
ONLY THE SKY WAS BLUE. EVERYTHING ELSE WAS GREY.

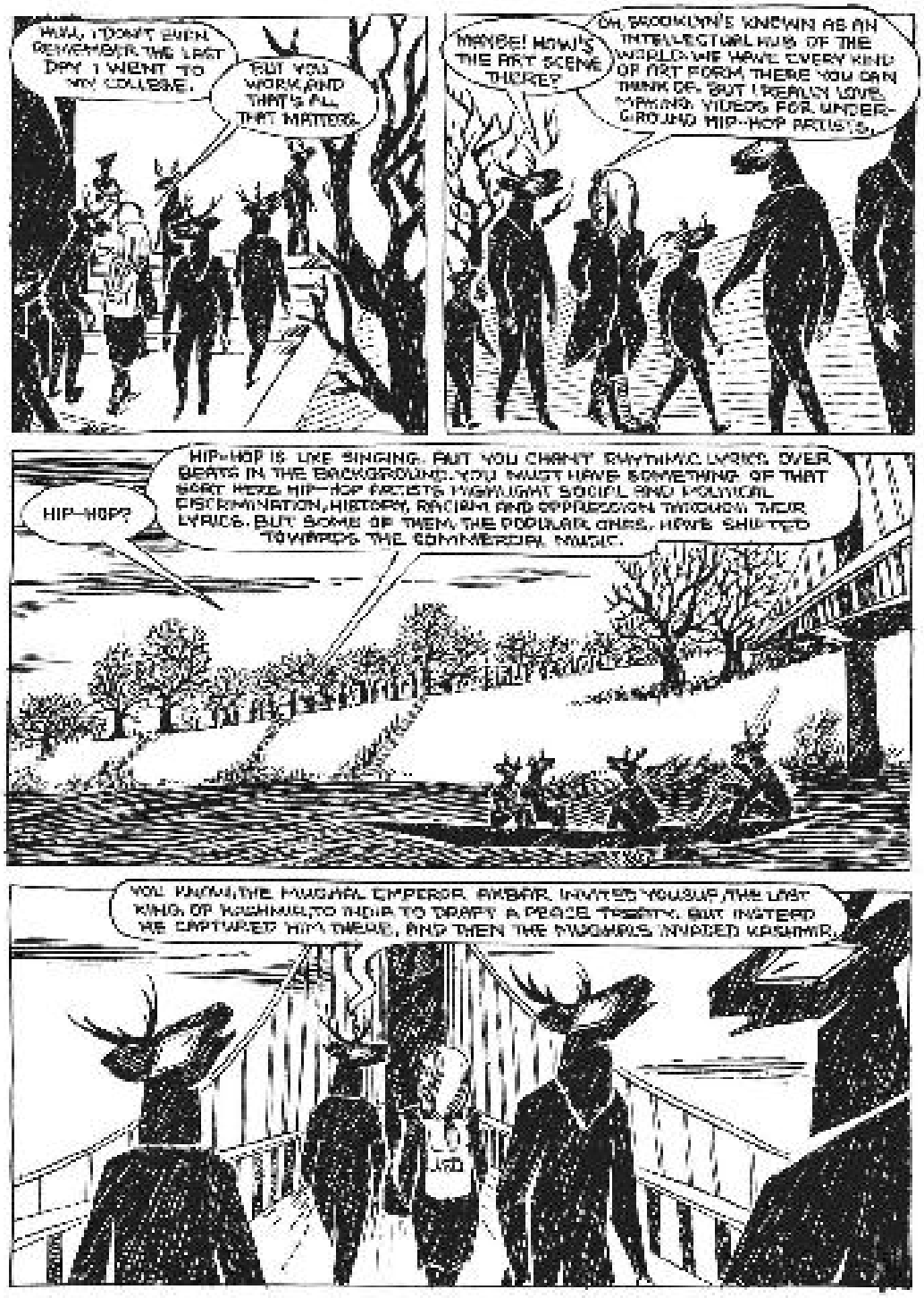
MUNNA WALKED INTO THE CHARRED BUILDING FLOOR. MAMA KEPT WALKING ON THE BUNS.
THE BUILDING WAS BURNT OUT AND HAD NO ROOF. IT WAS LIKE IT WAS STILL ON FIRE WITH INVISIBLE FLAMES. THERE WAS NO ONE THERE. MUNNA LAY ON THE HOT FLOOR. ONLY THE SKY WAS REMINISCENT OF THE WORLD HE'D KNOWN BEFORE.
BUT THE FLOOR WAS NOW UNBEARABLY HOT.
MUNNA, WAKE UP! YOUR ROOM'S ON FIRE!

DAMN IT! IT'S MY MATTRESS!
I WARNED YOU, DIDN'T I?
THAT YEAR, SPRING ARRIVED EARLY.
HI, AM I SPEAKING TO SPEAR?
YEAH!
OH, HI. I SAW SOME OF YOUR WORK ONLINE AND I REALLY LOVE IT. I'M AN ARTIST FROM THE U.S.
WOW! WHAT MADE YOU COME HERE?
I'M DOING SOME RESEARCH ON KASHMIRI TRADITIONAL ART. IF YOU HAVE SOME FREE TIME, CAN WE MEET FOR A COFFEE?
OF COURSE! I DON'T REMEMBER ANY FOREIGN ARTIST EVER VISITING KASHMIR!

NEWS RUSH
IS THERE ANY KIND OF ART SCENE IN KARAMAZOO?
YEAH, THERE ARE LOTS OF NEWSPAPERS AROUND SO... I GUESS. MOST OF THEM SELL 300 COPIES A DAY. LAST MONTH, OUR EDITOR FIRED A FEW REPORTERS. THEY LAUNCHED THEIR OWN NEWSPAPER. BUT G.R. IS THE BIGGEST.
I SAID "ART SCENE"?
HMM.
ARE THERE ANY ART GALLERIES? AN ART COMMUNITY? OR AN ART EXHIBITION SPACE?
THERE'S AN ART COLLEGE. I JOINED IT RECENTLY. BUT IT'S CLOSED FOR THE WINTER BREAK... IT USED TO BE A HOTEL, AND THEN A WAR TURNED INTO AN ART SCHOOL. WE EXHIBIT OUR PROJECTS IN THE CORRIDORS THERE. THERE'S NO ART GALLERY, THOUGH.

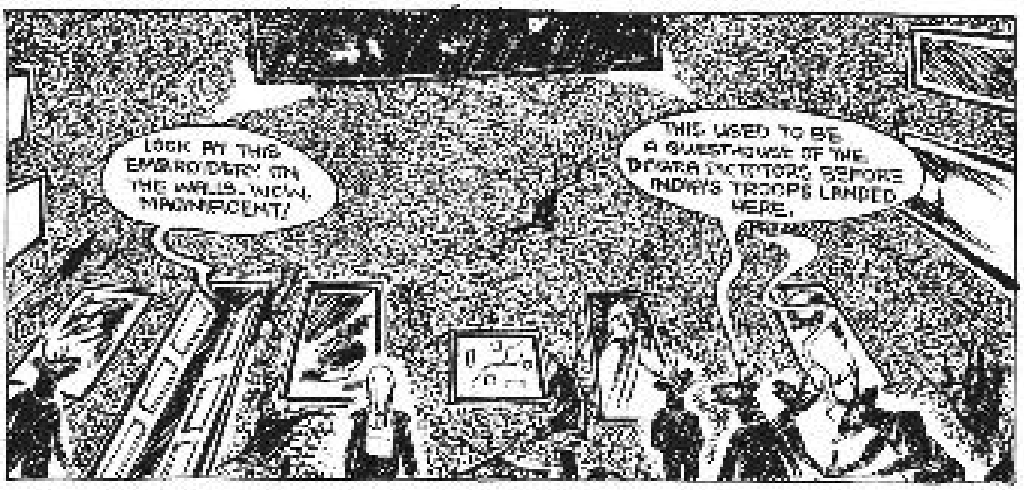
TELL ME ABOUT YOUR RESEARCH.
I DON'T REALLY HAVE A SPECIFIC PLAN. I JUST WANT TO LIVE HERE FIRST. UNDERSTAND THE LIFESTYLE AND CULTURE. THAT'S PRETTY MUCH MY RESEARCH. I MIGHT MAKE A FILM... DOES THAT SOUND DUMB?
OF COURSE NOT! I MEET FOREIGN JOURNALISTS AND ACADEMICS WERE ALL THE TIME. MOST OF THEM HEAD STRAIGHT FROM THE AIRPORT TO INTERVIEW THE POLITICAL LEADERS, LOCAL JOURNALISTS AND VICTIMS. THEN THEY HEAD BACK TO THE AIRPORT IN THEIR HIRED CARS AFTER A COUPLE OF DAYS.
THEY RARELY MINGLE WITH THE PEOPLE IN THE STREETS. BUT FOREIGN PUBLICATIONS REFER TO THEM AS KOSOVAR OR SOUTH ASIA SPECIALISTS. I CALL THAT DUMB.
RECENTLY SOME JOURNALISTS WANTED TO INTERVIEW ME. THEY HAD NO PATIENCE TO HEAR WHAT I HAD TO SAY. INSTEAD THEY WANTED ME TO LEAN AGAINST A WALL, STARE AT THE CLOUDS AND WIPE ANY TRACE OF A SMILE FROM MY FACE FOR A SCENE IN THEIR DOCUMENTARY ABOUT KOSOVAR. I HAD TO TELL THEM TO FUCK OFF. I'M GLAD THAT YOU'RE NOT IN SUCH A HURRY. YOU WON'T REGRET THIS!
THANKS, THAT MAKES ME HAPPY. I LIKE YOUR SHOES.
OH, THESE SHOES WERE ON SALE FOR EID. I LOVE YOUR EARRINGS. NOT THAT I'M RETURNING THE... THE COMPLIMENT. BUT I... LIKE...
OH, THANKS... ARE THERE ANY MUSEUMS I SHOULD CHECK OUT?

YEAH, IT'S NOT FAR FROM HERE.
WE SHOULD GO THERE, IF YOU DON'T MIND?
NOT AT ALL. YOU WANT TO GO NOW?
I'D LOVE TO!
IT'S FULL OF THE HISTORY OF KASHMIR. FROM THE IDOLS OF THE 'BUDDHIST' PERIOD TO THE IDOLS FROM THE CURRENT ERA. I LOVE THE KASHMIRI MINIATURE PAINTINGS THERE.
I LOVE THIS PLACE - YOU HAVE SUCH CLEAN AIR. HERE!
AND TRY TO BREATHE AS MUCH AS WE CAN.
SO TELL ME ABOUT LIFE IN AMERICA?
WELL, THE U.S. IS HUGE. I LIVE IN BROOKLYN.
DID YOU STUDY THEIRS AS WELL?
YEAH, I STUDIED THE HISTORY OF TRADE BETWEEN THE U.S. AND ASIA.


WELL, I DON'T EVEN REMEMBER THE LAST DAY I WENT TO MY COLLEGE.
BUT YOU WORK AND THAT'S ALL THAT MATTERS.
MAYBE! HOW'S THE ART SCENE THERE?
OH, BROOKLYN'S KNOWN AS AN INTELLECTUAL HUB OF THE WORLD. WE HAVE EVERY KIND OF ART FORM THERE YOU CAN THINK OF. BUT I REALLY LOVE MAKING VIDEOS FOR UNDER-GROUND HIP-HOP ARTISTS.
HIP-HOP?
HIP-HOP IS LIKE SINGING. BUT YOU CHANT RHYTHMIC LYRICS OVER BEATS IN THE BACKGROUND. YOU MUST HAVE SOMETHING OF THAT SORT HERE. HIP-HOP ARTISTS HIGHLIGHT SOCIAL AND POLITICAL DISCRIMINATION, HISTORY, RACISM AND OPPRESSION THROUGH THEIR LYRICS. BUT SOME OF THEM, THE POPULAR ONES, HAVE SHIFTED TOWARDS THE COMMERCIAL MUSIC.
YOU KNOW, THE MUGHAL EMPEROR, AKBAR, INVITED YOUSUF, THE LAST KING OF KASHMIR, TO INDIA TO DRAFT A PEACE TREATY. BUT INSTEAD HE CAPTURED HIM THERE, AND THEN THE MUGHALS INVADED KASHMIR.

THE HEART-BROKEN QUEEN OF KASHMIR WROTE MANY POEMS LAMENTING THE MISERIES OF KASHMIR AND HER SEPARATION FROM HER BELOVED HUSBAND.
THOSE POEMS ARE STILL SUNG BY THE WOMEN HERE. BUT I'M NOT SURE IF YOU CAN CALL THAT HIP-HOP. THE WEIRD "HIP-HOP" KIND OF MAKES YOU WANT TO SHAKE YOUR BODY.
HERE, LISTEN TO THIS. I THINK YOU'LL LIKE IT.
LOWER THE VOLUME!
THAT WAS LIKE A BULLFIGHT IN MY HEAD BUT THANKS.
YOU GET USED TO IT, THEN YOU GET ADDICTED.
HUH, YOU CALL THAT A MUSEUM? IT'S A BUNKER!
IT'S BOTH.
MUSEUM
WELCOME

PATHETIC. YOU'RE NOT SUPPOSED TO TOUCH ARTEFACTS LIKE THESE.
OF COURSE NOT, THEY'RE JUST DRYING THEIR UNDERWEAR.


LOOK AT THIS EMBROIDERY ON THE WALLS. WOW, MAGNIFICENT!
THIS USED TO BE A GUEST-HOUSE OF THE DYARA DICTATORS BEFORE INDIA'S TROOPS LANDED HERE.

CAN YOU READ WHAT'S WRITTEN ON THESE COINS? THERE'S NO DESCRIPTION.
NO, PERHAPS THEY'RE FROM THE BUDDHIST PERIOD.

HMMM, IT ONLY SAYS "PIECE OF CLOTH" IN THE DESCRIPTION.
I GUESS THEY'RE BEING SUBTLE. YOU KNOW, THE DOGRA DICTATORS WOULD GET THEIR ROSES WIPED WITH PASHMINA SHAWLS. THEN THEY'D THROW THOSE FILTHY SHAWLS TO POOR KASHMIRI SLAVES.

HEY LOOK AT THOSE MINIATURE SCULPTURES OF THEATRE ACTORS. THEY USED TO HIGHLIGHT THE MISERIES OF KASHMIRIS THROUGH THEIR PLAYS.
REALLY? I SHOULD CHECK THAT OUT.

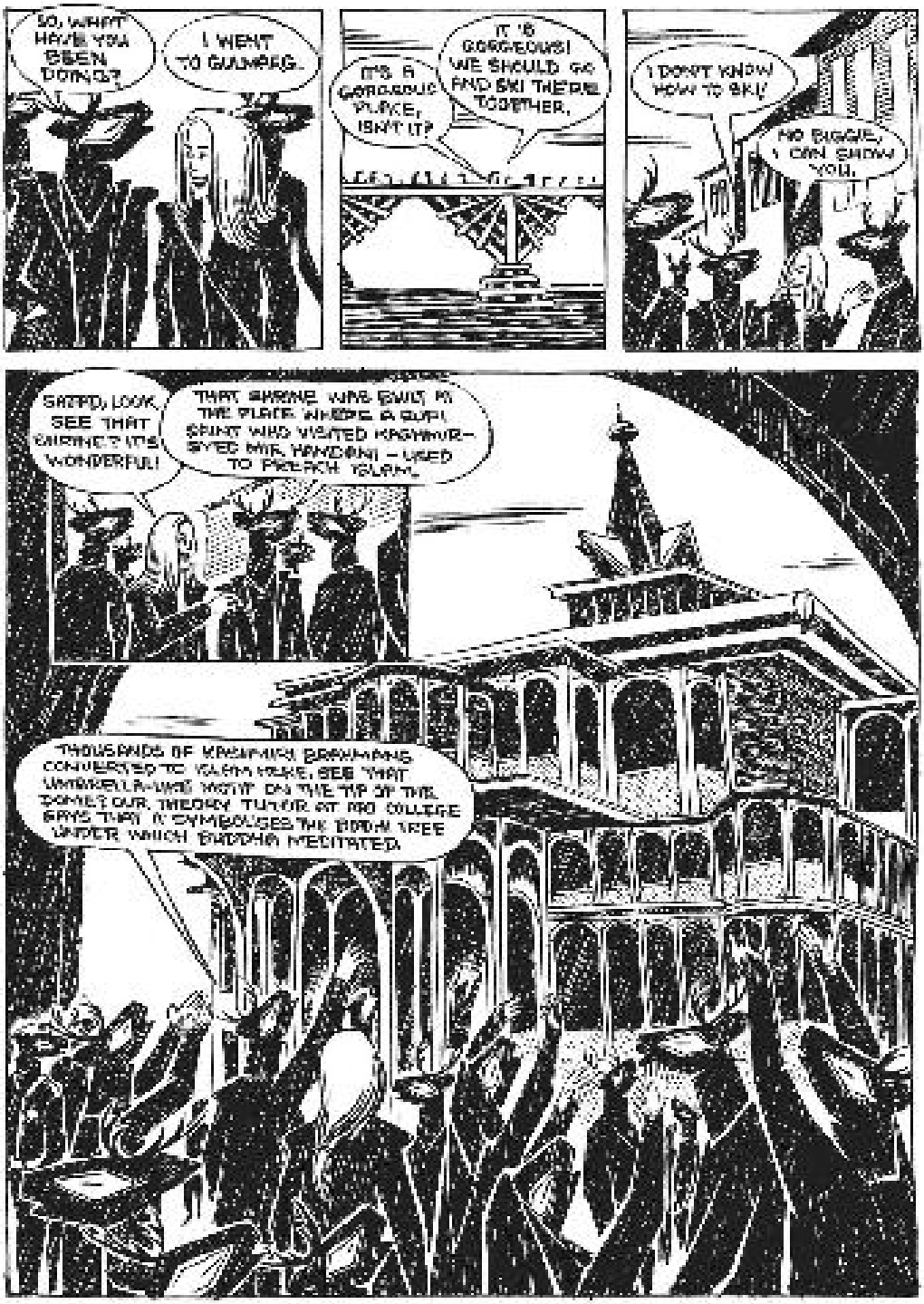
YOU MUST. IT'S CALLED BAND PATHER. THEY ACTED LIKE MAHARAJAS AND WHIPPED THE PEOPLE IN THEIR PLAYS. THEY USED TO CAPTURE THE OPPRESSION THAT KASHMIRIS FACED AT THAT TIME. THEY WERE HISTORIANS, AUTHORS, ACTORS, POETS AND MUSICIANS.

MORE IMPORTANTLY, THEY ENTERTAINED PEOPLE AND MADE THEM LAUGH AT THE OPPRESSION THEY FACED. WE NEED THEM MORE THAN EVER NOW... BUT...
WHAT?
WELL, I'VE SEEN SOME PERFORMANCES, BUT NOW THE COMMUNITY THEY SERVED HAS ABANDONED THEM, TREATS THEM AS OUTCASTS.
ONE OF MY FRIENDS WHO WORKED WITH THEM AS A MAKE-UP ARTIST SAYS THAT THE RESISTANCE GROUPS THREATENED TO BAN THEM FROM PERFORMING AND CALLED THEIR ART AN ACT OF IMMORALITY AND BLASPHEMY.
MANY SENIOR JOURNALISTS IN THE PRESS CALL THEM TRANSSEXUALS BECAUSE THE MALE PERFORMERS PLAYED BOTH MALE AND FEMALE PARTS THEMSELVES, LIKE IN SHAKESPEAREAN PLAYS.
ANYWAY, THE GOVERNMENT HAS ADOPTED THE REMAINING BANDS. AND THEY'RE MADE TO ENTERTAIN GOVERNMENT AND MILITARY OFFICIALS AT STATE EVENTS. THEIR PLAYS NOW LACK ANY SOCIAL OR POLITICAL COMMENTARY.
THAT'S PRETTY FUCKED UP.
WHY DON'T THEY...
SHHH, QUIET. FOLLOW ME. DO YOU HAVE A CAMERA?

WHAT IS IT?
LOOK AT THIS.
DON'T GO THROUGH THAT DOOR!
OUT! I SAID OUT! THE MUSEUM'S CLOSED NOW!
WHAT AN ASSHOLE! WHAT WAS IN THAT ROOM?
IT WAS A KITCHEN.
I THINK THEY COOK THERE. ONE LEG OF THE KEROSENE STOVE WAS BROKEN. BUT IT WAS SUPPORTED BY THE HEAD FROM AN ANCIENT STATUE OF BUDDHA.
YOU SHOULD MAKE A CARTOON ABOUT IT.
I HAD A GREAT TIME WITH YOU. SPEND WE MUST HANG OUT AGAIN SOON.
SURE, IT WAS FUN. CALL ME ANYTIME!

HER PRESENCE RELIEVED ALL SPARO'S SORROWS.
HER HAIR WAS DARK, HER EYES GREEN. HER HANDS WERE LITTLE AND HER EARRINGS WERE PERFECT. SHE FILLED THE AIR WITH THE PERFUME OF HER LIP GLOSS.
HER ABSENCE LEFT A MELANCHOLIC EMPTINESS.
SHE EMBODIED ELEGANCE AND GRACE - SHE WAS LIKE THE PAISLEY SPIRA DREW OVER AND OVER AGAIN BEFORE HE GOT ITS CURVES RIGHT.
HIS MOBILE PHONE FELT PRECIOUS WITH HER NUMBER IN IT.
IF ONLY SPARO COULD BUILD HIS OWN MUSEUM, HER EARRING COULD BE THE FIRST PIECE IN HIS COLLECTION.

THERE WAS NO WAY WE COULD SLEEP.
SHE MIGHT CALL...
A FEW DAYS LATER, SHE DID.
BE COOL AND ACT NATURAL.
YES BOSS.
BE COOL AND..
YEAH, YEAH
HEY!!
I LIKE YOUR JACKET. SAYED-YOU LOOK LIKE A CARTOONIST.
AND YOU STILL REMIND ME OF VERMEER'S GIRL WITH A PEARL EARRING.


SO, WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN DOING?
I WENT TO GULMARG.
IT'S A GORGEOUS PLACE, ISN'T IT?
IT'S GORGEOUS! WE SHOULD GO AND SKI THERE TOGETHER.
I DON'T KNOW HOW TO SKI!
NO BIGGIE, I CAN SHOW YOU.
SAZPO, LOOK. SEE THAT SHRINE? IT'S WONDERFUL!
THAT SHRINE WAS BUILT IN THE PLACE WHERE A SUFI SAINT WHO VISITED KASHMIR – SYED MIR HAMDANI – USED TO PREACH ISLAM.
THOUSANDS OF KASHMIRI BRAHMANS CONVERTED TO ISLAM HERE. SEE THAT UMBRELLA-LIKE MOTIF ON THE TIP OF THE DOME? OUR THEORY TUTOR AT RIO COLLEGE SAYS THAT IT SYMBOLIZES THE BODHI TREE UNDER WHICH BUDDHA MEDITATED.

THERE'S NOT AN INCH INSIDE THIS SHRINE WHICH ISN'T PAINTED WITH TRADITIONAL MOTIFS, MINIATURE PAINTING ELEMENTS AND ISLAMIC CALLIGRAPHY. YOU COULD SAY THAT SHRINES ARE THE ART GALLERIES OF KASHMIR.
LET'S GO INSIDE.
EXCUSE ME! YOU CAN'T GO INSIDE.
THIS IS A SHRINE. HOW CAN YOU STOP US?
YOU CAN GO, BUT WOMEN AREN'T ALLOWED INSIDE.
WHY NOT?
WHAT?
THERE'S A SEPARATE CHAMBER FOR WOMEN ON THE OTHER SIDE.
BUT SHE WANTS TO SEE THE PAPIER-MÂCHÉ AND MINIATURE ART.
PLEASE.
SHE CAN GO TO THE WOMEN'S CHAMBER.
SHE WANTS TO SEE THE WOODCARVINGS AND THE CALLIGRAPHY ON THE WALLS.
THE WALLS IN THE WOMEN'S CHAMBER ARE DECORATED AS WELL.

LET'S GO, MAN. I'M NOT INTERESTED IN GOING THERE ANY MORE. HE'S RUINED IT.
YEAH, LET'S KEEP WALKING. THERE ARE GURUS IN EVERY CORNER HERE.
BUT WHY? JUST BECAUSE I'M A WOMAN?
COME ON. DON'T BE UPSET. SEE, MEN CAN'T PRAY IN THE WOMEN'S CHAMBER THERE, EITHER.
HUH.
HEY, YOUR GURU'S HOT! WHAT'S HER NAME?
AND WHERE DOES SHE LIVE?
THAT ASS! LOOK AT THAT ASS!
LET'S GET OUT OF HERE. IT'S GETTING SUFFOCATING...
SHE MIGHT SAVE MASSAGE, MAN.
THOSE TITS!
UH, PLEASE IGNORE THEM. YOU KNOW, THERE'S A SAYING IN KASHMIR: THAT SOME PEOPLE ARE BORN FROM ASSES.
FUCK, I NEED TO USE THE BATHROOM.

LET'S GET LUNCH SOMEWHERE.
I'M SICK OF EATING IN RESTAURANTS.
WELL, THEN! MY MOTHER IS THE BEST COOK.
YOU LIVE WITH YOUR PARENTS?
WHY'S DON'T YOU?
PERLEEM-U-ALEIKUM!
WAILA-I-KUM
MAMMAR, THIS IS MY FRIEND DAISLEY. SHE'S RESEARCHING LIFE AND ART IN KAMMR BUT RIGHT NOW WE'RE STARVING.
YES YES, COME IN. FOOD'S READY. TELL HER SHE SHOULD FEEL FEEL AT HOME HERE.
MAMMAR'S SAYING YOU SHOULD FEEL AT HOME HERE.
SAYYD, YOU LOOK LIKE YOUR MOM. TELL HER I SAID SHE'S BEAUTIFUL.
MAMMAR, SHE'D SAYING, YOU'RE BEAUTIFUL.
SHE'S SO CUTE! HURRY UP, SHE MUST BE HUNGRY.

SORRY FOR BEING SO DRAMATIC AT THE SHRINE. BUT I WAS REALLY EXCITED TO GO INSIDE.
NO, YOU WEREN'T DRAMATIC AT ALL.. I SHOULD HAVE BEEN MORE CAREFUL. I THOUGHT YOU MIGHT GET IN BECAUSE YOU'RE A TOURIST. EVEN MAYMAR CAN'T ENTER THE MEN'S CHAMBER.
YOU KNOW THEY SAY THAT BUDDHA AND RISHIKA, IN KASHMIR, WAS BREASTFED BY A SAINT CALLED LALLA-DEDI. APPARENTLY SHE USED TO WALK AROUND NAKED BEFORE SHRI HANTOPAN CAME TO KASHMIR...
ANYWAY, WHEN LALLA-DEDI SAW SHRI HANTOPAN, SHE SAID, "I SAW A MAN!" THEN JUMPED INTO A FIRE AND EMERGED FROM IT CLOTHED IN A MULTI-COLOURED CLOAK.
I GUESS THE POINT IS, YOU CAN DO PRETTY MUCH WHATEVER YOU WANT IN KASHMIR, BUT IN SHRINES, YOU HAVE TO FOLLOW THE TRADITION.

I MUST SAY, YOU LOOK TERRIFIC WHEN YOU SMILE.
BECAUSE THIS FOOD IS DELICIOUS. I WANT TO EAT WITH MY HANDS AS WELL!
IS THIS SPINACH? I LOVE HOW YOUR MOM COOKS- I CAN'T STOP EATING, I'M GOING TO GET FAT!
SO...TELL ME MORE ABOUT YOUR WORK.
WELL, I USED TO WORK AS AN ANIMATOR FOR DTA, WHICH IS A GOVERNMENT-RUN TV CHANNEL.
AND I MADE ANIMATIONS ABOUT SOUP. TRUCKS THERE. BUT LIKE I SAID, IT WAS A GOVERNMENT-RUN CHANNEL-AND I DREAMT ABOUT POLITICS, IT WOULD HAVE HAD TO BE IN FAVOUR OF THE GOVERNMENT. SO I AVOIDED POLITICS ANYONE WEEK THERE.
BUT THEY DIDN'T RENEW MY CONTRACT WHEN I REFUSED TO BRAND RESISTANCE LEADERS AS TERRORISTS. I'M HAPPY AT G.A.P. THEY'RE LIKE MY FAMILY- THEY LOVE ME EVEN WHEN I MAKE MISTAKES.
BOARD?
WHAT?

I WISH I COULD DO SOMETHING LIKE THAT. I REALLY LOVE HOW PASSIONATE YOU ARE ABOUT YOUR WORK.
I... I WISH WE WERE TOGETHER.
WE ARE! JUST CALL ME WHENEVER. YOU GO OUT WITH YOUR CAMERA. I'D LOVE TO COME WITH YOU.
NO, I MEAN...

WOULD YOU... DIVORCE ME?
WHAT?
WILL YOU NOT DIVORCE ME, PLEASE?
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
I'LL CLEAN AND LEARN HOW TO MAKE KASHMIRI FOOD FOR YOU LIKE A KASHMIRI GIRL. I'LL TAKE CARE OF YOU. BUT DONT DIVORCE ME.
I DON'T GET IT.
IS THIS YOUR FIRST KISS?
THE CAVE MAN HAD JUST DISCOVERED FIRE. NERVOUS MUNNIA KEPT HIS EYES OPEN TO MAKE SURE IT WASN'T A DREAM AND EXCITED SAGRO CAREFULLY PULLED OUT HER HAIRBAND TO KEEP AS A SOUVENIR OF THAT MOMENT.

MEMORIES

PAPA DOESN'T SEEM TO BE SAVING FOR SMOKING ANY MORE.
BEING ADDICTED TO NICOTINE HIMSELF, HE SNEAKS INTO SARAH'S ROOM EARLY IN THE MORNING AND STEALS HER CIGARETTES.
THERE ARE NO SHOPS OPEN, IT'S BEEN SEVERAL WEEKS NOW AND THE CURFEW OUTSIDE HASN'T BEEN LIFTED.
SUDDENLY CRAVING WAKES HIM UP AND HE DISCOVERS THAT PAPA HAS PLUNDERED HIS TREASURE.
OUT OF DESPERATION, HE SQUEEZES OUT THE FLAKES OF TOBACCO FROM CIGARETTE BUTTS AND ROLLS THEM IN A PIECE OF A NEWSPAPER.

HE DOESN'T REMEMBER WHAT DAY IT IS.
PAISLEY USED TO SAY THAT YOGA WAS THE BEST ANTIDEPRESSANT.
BUT EVERY DEEP BREATH LEAVES SAND FEELING NOSTALGIC.
IT HAS BEEN OVER FOUR WEEKS NOW, SINCE SHE LEFT KASHMIR.
THE WORLD WAS BIGGER WHEN SHE WAS AROUND.
THOSE OLD WOODEN AND BRICK HOUSES IN THE OLD CITY.
THE COUNTRYSIDE.
THE JHELUM BANK.
THE MOUNTAINS AND BRIDGES.
THERE'S NOTHING NOW EXCEPT THE FOUR WALLS OF HIS ROOM. IF ONLY THERE WERE NO MEMORIES OF PAISLEY, THIS ISOLATION WOULDN'T BE SO MERCILESS.

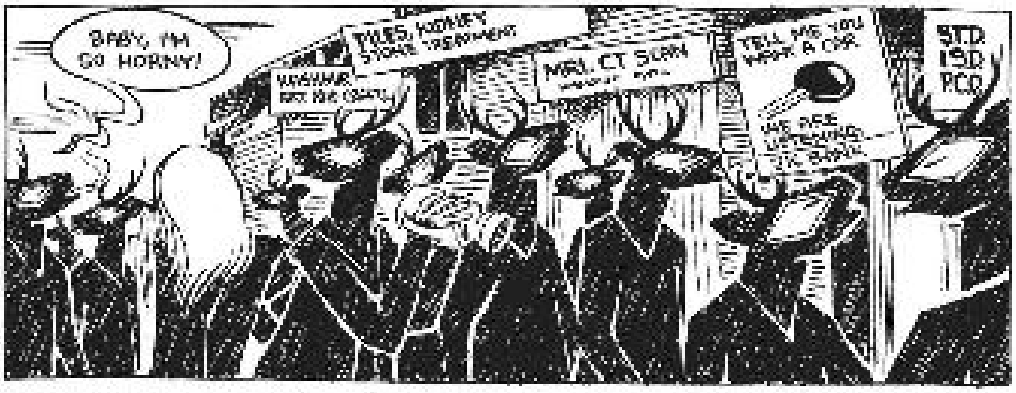
MUNNU, DON'T BE SO SAD, I'LL COME BACK FOR YOU.
I WISH IT WAS IN MY POWER, BUT I CAN'T HELP IT. I MISS YOU ALREADY.
YOU THINK I'M NOT GOING TO MISS YOU? THINK ABOUT THE GREAT TIME WE'VE HAD...
THE IDEA OF YOU BEING SO FAR AWAY ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE PLANET IS CHOKING ME, PRESLEY...
ANYWAY, I'M HERE FOR ONE MORE MONTH.
... AND HOW CAN I SAY GOODBYE TO YOU? YOUR PRESENCE SOOTHES ME. AND WITHOUT YOU... IT'S GOING TO BE A NIGHTMARE!
THAT'S BECAUSE I'M YOUR FIRST GIRLFRIEND. I KNOW THAT FEELING. YOU WERE MAMMAVE MUNNU BEFORE.
DON'T SAY THAT! YOU'RE GOING TO BE MY LAST GIRLFRIEND. I WANT TO BE WITH YOU TILL THE END!
AND I WASN'T MAMMAVE MUNNU, I WAS JUST AFRAID OF ASKING ANY GIRL. BUT WHEN I WAS LITTLE, I WROTE A POEM FOR A GIRL. I HAD A CRUSH ON HER IN DARRAGAH. BUT MOUI GAMES FOUND OUT. HE TORTURED ME AND TOLD MY PARENTS. I WAS BARRED FROM GOING TO DARRAGAH.
YOU, AND THAT GIRL WAS YOUR ONLY LOVE? I FEEL LIKE I'M SPOILING YOU. HOW OLD WERE YOU THEN?

YOU AREN'T SPOILING ME. I'D ONLY BEEN TO THE OLD CITY A FEW TIMES BEFORE, AND NOW WE SPEND ALL DAY IN THESE OLD ALLEYS. WE INTERVIEW ARTISANS AND TALK TO THE OLDER GENERATION. I FEEL LIKE I WAS FOREIGNER TO MY OWN LAND BEFORE I MET YOU. YOU'RE NOT SPOILING ME.
SAJAD, LOOK AT THAT...
THAT MUST BE AN ABANDONED HOUSE. SEE ALL THE GLASS IN THE WINDOWS IS BROKEN.
I LOVE THE WOODCARVING ON THOSE WINDOWS
I WAS RIGHT—THIS HOUSE IS ABANDONED AND OCCUPIED BY POOR INDIANS.
I WANT TO FILM. WHAT YOU THINK I SHOULD ASK THEM FOR PERMISSION FIRST?
PERMISSION? YOU NEED NO PERMISSION FROM AN INDIAN IN KASHMIR!

WOW! WHY DO THEY COVER ALL THE WALLS WITH THE NEWSPAPERS?
YOU KNOW WHY--THE ARMY COVERED THE WALLS IN OUR SCHOOL WITH NEWSPAPERS, TOO, TO CONCEAL THE BULLET HOLES AND BLOOD STAINS.
OH, THAT'S IT! YOU TEAR THESE NEWS-PAPERS AND I'LL FILM IT.
AND I'LL PAY YOU IN KISSES.
SHUT UP!

IT MAKES ME SO SAD—THESE HOUSES WON'T BE AROUND FOR LONG. IT MUST HAVE TAKEN THOSE ARTISTS FOREVER TO PAINT THESE WALLS.
CENTURIES! IF YOU READ OUR HISTORY, YOU'LL SEE HOW LONG IT TOOK KASHMIRIS TO SHAPE SUCH DESIGNS.
AND NOW IT TAKES PEOPLE A DAY OR TWO TO RAZE THESE BEAUTIFUL HOUSES AND REPLACE THEM WITH UGLY CONCRETE.
SHOPPING MALLS! SHOPPING MALLS THEY CALL THOSE WRINKLES. THEY DON'T SPARE AGRICULTURAL LAND, EITHER, FUCKHEADS.
SPEAK FLUENT ENGLISH IN 30 DAYS
HOTEL
ULTRASOUND
HOTEL
PHOTOCOPY
PAN CARD
LET'S GET OUT OF HERE. IT'S DEPRESSING.

HOTEL PRIVADO
ULTRASOUND.
30% DISCOUNT.
SPEAK FLUENT ENGLISH
JOCKSTRAP WIPE, BOXL
STD ISD PCO
INTERNET CAFE


BABY, I'M SO HORNY!
MRS. CT SCAN
STD ISD PCO

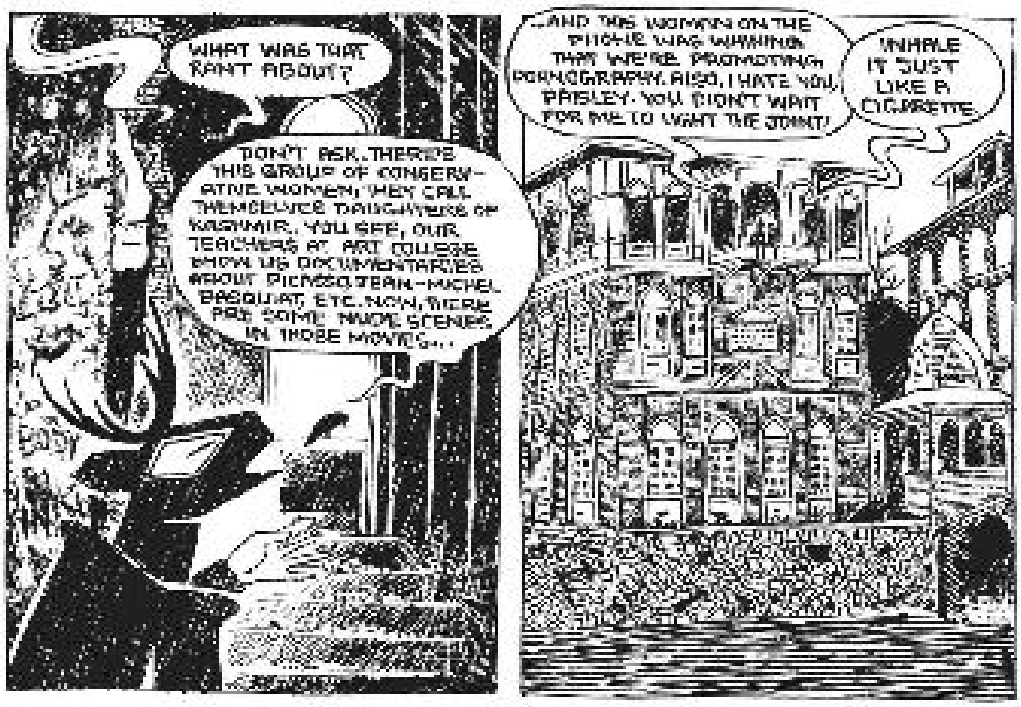
EXCUSE ME! EXCUSE ME, MADAM! YOU WANT SOME BEER?

PURE, VERY PURE. VERY CHEAP!
THE BIRDS
INDIAN ARMY

PAISLEY, HE THINKS I'M A FOREIGNER, TOO!
WHY DON'T YOU PRETEND TO BE ONE? THERE'S NO HARM IN TRYING IT ONCE.
TRUST ME!
BUT WHAT IF SOMEONE SEES ME? PAPA WILL DISOWN ME.
I TOLD YOU. YOU'RE STILL A MUNNU.
DISCOUNT FOR YOU.
ALRIGHT, LET ME CHECK.
VERY GOOD, VERY GOOD.
GOOD INVESTMENT!
NOW, HOW DO I ROLL THIS?
WE NEED TO BUY SOME ROLLING PAPERS.
YOU TAKE MY NUMBER, EXCUSE ME.
WHAT IF THE SHOPKEEPER KNOWS THAT I'M THE CARTOONIST FOR GQ?
MAYBE WE SHOULD GO TO THE RIVERSIDE; BOYS THERE SMOKE ALL THE TIME. THEY MIGHT GIVE US SOME.
YOU'RE A CUTIE PIE.

SAHAD, LOOKS LIKE YOU WERE RIGHT. YOU GO AND ASK THEM. I'LL WAIT FOR YOU IN THAT TEMPLE.
CAN I BORROW SOME ROLLING PAPERS, PLEASE?
THERE'S NO NEED FOR PAPERS!
"GENTLY TOBACCO OUT OF THE CIG. CAREFULLY!"
"HEAT UP THE HASH!"
"CRUSH AND MIX IT WITH THE TOBACCO!"
"AND POUR THE MIX BACK INTO THE CIGARETTE TUBE!"
PAISLEY...? WHERE ARE YOU?
PAISLEY!
PAISLEY!
HELP!
HELP!

HAHAHA! YOU'RE SO SCARED OF DOGS!
WE'RE READY.
YOU ROLL LIKE A PRO! WHO COULD SAY THIS IS YOUR FIRST TIME?
LET'S GO SOMEWHERE QUIET. I WANT TO LINGER ON THIS FIRST EXPERIENCE. THE DOGS HERE ARE MEAN.
I THINK THAT HOUSE LOOKS PERFECT. AND IT LOOKS ABANDONED.
HOLD ON. LET ME ANSWER THIS.
YEAH, YEAH, YEAH... LET ME TALK. LISTEN! PERSECUTE THE MALE DOCTORS IN THE MATER NITY HOSPITAL. FIRST, THEY SEE PREGNANT WOMEN NAKED IN THE OPERATION THEATRES...
YEAH. OKAY, YEAH. WHAT DO YOU MEAN? ARTISTS AREN'T DOCTORS? MAYBE IT WAS AN ARTIST WHO GAVE MANKIND THE IDEA FOR ANATOMY!
YEAH. SO?
THERE'S A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PORNOGRAPHY AND STUDYING ANATOMY. WHY THE HELL ARE YOU EVEN BOTHERED ABOUT THIS WHEN THERE ARE BIGGER PROBLEMS IN KASHMIR FOR YOU TO BE WORRIED ABOUT?
BALBAM!


WHAT WAS THAT RANT ABOUT?
DON'T ASK. THERE'S THIS GROUP OF CONSERVATIVE WOMEN, THEY CALL THEMSELVES DAUGHTERS OF KASHMIR. YOU SEE, OUR TEACHERS AT ART COLLEGE SHOW US DOCUMENTARIES ABOUT PICASSO, JEAN-MICHEL BASQUIAT, ETC. NOW, THERE ARE SOME NUDE SCENES IN THOSE MOVIES...
AND THIS WOMAN ON THE PHONE WAS WARNING THAT WE'RE PROMOTING PORNOGRAPHY. ALSO, I HATE YOU, PRISLEY. YOU DIDN'T WAIT FOR ME TO LIGHT THE JOINT!
INHALE IT JUST LIKE A CIGARETTE.

WHAT WAS THAT...? MY BUTT IS FLOATING.
GOD, LOOK AT THEM. LATTICEWORK ON THE CEILING.
I LOVE YOU, PAULEY.
STOP SHOUTIN' SAYING, YOU'LL GET SICK OF ME.
NEVVER EVVERR.
I WAS SAYING THAT WE HAVE A REAL, YOU-KNOW SKELETON IN OUR COLLEGE. WHEN WE SUCTION IT, I WONDER IF THE PERSON THE SKELETON ONCE HELD UPRIGHT IS WATCHING US.
THIS SHIT'S PARTICLEBOARD...
CAN YOU SEE THAT STAR OF DAVID ON THE CEILING?
POOR STAR OF DAVID! ONCE UPON A TIME, ONE OF ITS WINGS WAS IN EUROPE AND THE OTHER ONE WAS IN ASIA.

ARE YOU TRYING TO BECOME A POET?
POET? NOT BAD. BUT I DON'T KNOW ENOUGH WORDS EITHER IN KASHMIRI OR IN ANY OTHER LANGUAGE. AND WHAT POWER DO THE WORDS CARRY ANYWAY?
YOU KNOW, YOU CLOSE THE BOOK BUT THE CHARACTERS IN THE STORY CONTINUE MOURNING. LIKE THE WOMEN I INTERVIEWED. I WANT A DAUGHTER, PRISLEY.
PERHAPS HAVING NO CHILDREN IS THE BEST POSSIBLE WAY TO ENSURE THEIR HAPPINESS.
ARE YOU KNOCKING ON THE FLOOR, SPEPO?
I CAN'T FEEL MY BODY.
I CAN HEAR FOOTSTEPS!
REALLY? PUT THE JOINT OUT RIGHT NOW!
AND FIX YOUR CAMERA ON THE TRIPOD.

SORRY TO INTERRUPT YOU. I THOUGHT UNRULY BOYS WERE GAMBLING HERE AGAIN.
IT'S OKAY. WE WERE FIXING THE LATTICEWORK ON THE CEILING. IS THIS YOUR HOUSE?
I'M JUST A NEIGHBOUR. THIS HOUSE BELONGS TO A PANDAT FAMILY.
WHERE ARE THEY?
SOME OF THEM ARE IN INDIA, BUT I'M NOT SURE.
DO THEY EVER COME HERE? THIS HOUSE IS GORGEOUS.
THEY VISITED HERE MANY YEARS AGO, BUT IT UPSETS THEM. IF YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN.
WHY?
IT USED TO BE A BIG FAMILY LIVING HERE. ONE OF THEM WAS MY TEACHER. THEIR CHILDREN WERE OUR CLASSMATES. THEY WERE GOOD CRICKETERS.
THAT USED TO BE OUR SCHOOL, OVER THERE.

BACK THEN WE HARDLY CARED WHO WAS PANDIT AND WHO WAS MUSLIM. WE'D STEAL EACH THERS LUNCHES AND SWIM TOGETHER IN THAT CANAL THERE. IT WASN'T A SEWAGE CHANNEL THEN. BUT THEY FELT ISOLATED AFTER THE ARMED STRUGGLE AGAINST THE INDIAN OCCUPATION ERUPTED.
THE PANDITS THOUGHT IT WAS KASHMIRI MUSLIMS VERSUS KASHMIRI PANDITS...THEY FELT INSECURE AND LEFT.
DID YOU TRY TO STOP YOUR FRIENDS?
THE SITUATION WAS TERRIBLE, TERRIBLE. PEOPLE WERE BEING KILLED LIKE FLIES IN THE FIRE.
"IN GAWKADAL, SOME BRAVE BOYS TRIED TO BLOCK THE BARRELS OF THE AUTOMATIC GUNS WITH THEIR CHESTS. THEY SAVED MANY LIVES."
"STILL, OVER 50 PEOPLE DIED..."

A CURFEW FOLLOWED WITH ORDERS TO SHOOT ON SIGHT...
"PEOPLE COULDN'T EVEN MOVE THE CORPSES OF THEIR KIN FROM THE STREETS."
ISLAM IS OUR BOND WITH PAKISTAN!
WE WANT FREEDOM!
GET OUT, INDIA!
"SOME OF THE RESISTANCE GROUPS WHO WERE IN FAVOUR OF PAKISTAN TOOK ADVANTAGE OF THE PLIGHT OF THE MAJORITY IN KASHMIR AND ESTABLISHED ISLAM IN A DIVINE MARRIAGE WITH PAKISTAN."
PANDITS WERE A MINORITY SO THEY FELT INSECURE, VULNERABLE AND LEFT OUT.
INFIDELS, INFIDELS, GET OUT OF KASHMIR BUT LEAVE YOUR WOMEN HERE!
ON THE OTHER HAND, SOME UNRULY KIDS SCARED THE SHIT OUT OF THE PANDIT FAMILIES IN THIS NEIGHBOURHOOD.
WE WANT FREEDOM!
"THEY'D PELT STONES AT THEIR HOUSES AND CALL THEM INFIDELS."

"MY FATHER TRIED TO SCOLD THEM. BUT THOSE BRUTES DIDN'T SHOW ANY RESPECT TO HIS WHITE BEARD EITHER."
"ONE OF OUR BANDIT NEIGHBOURS STAYED WITH US WITH HIS FAMILY FOR A COUPLE OF WEEKS."
"BUT ONE BY ONE, EVERY BANDIT IN THIS NEIGHBOURHOOD LEFT. AS IF IT WAS HAUNTED HERE, THEY DECIDED TO LEAVE."
I WOULD HAVE DONE THE SAME, YOU KNOW!! THEY HAD LITTLE CHILDREN AND FAMILIES. BUT THE GUY IN THIS HOUSE WAS STUBBORNLY AGAINST LEAVING.
HOME... FAMILY... WHERE YOU ARE LEAVING... ANCESTORS... WE'LL. THAT... THING... WHERE...
"HE WAS MENTALLY UNSOUND."

A WEEK, OR SO LATER, SOME MASKED GUNMEN RAIDED THE HOUSE!
AND SHOT HIM POINT BLANK IN THE HEAD!!
HE DIED RIGHT THERE, IN THAT ROOM.
BOOK IT WAS UNCLEAR WHO WAS KILLING WHOM AND WHO WAS FIGHTING FOR WHAT. MANY MUSLIMS, USUALLY THE THINKERS AND WELL-OFF ONES, WERE KILLED AS WELL...
MEN ONES WERE ROBBED AT GUNPOINT. MANY MUSLIM WOMEN WERE FORCEFULLY TAKEN AWAY FROM THEIR PARENTS, EVEN FROM THEIR HUSBANDS, THEN RAPED OR FORCED TO MARRY THEIR KIDNAPPERS. PEOPLE WERE KILLED BY ARMED MILITANTS JUST TO SETTLE PERSONAL SCORES...
AND A LOT OF PANDITS WERE KILLED FIRST SO THAT SOME MASKED MANIAC COULD HAVE THE AMUSEMENT OF CRACKING THEIR SKULLS!
SO MOST OF THE PANDITS LEFT, SOME TO THOSE FILTHY REFUGEE CAMPS IN JAMMU, OTHERS TO INDIA OR THE WEST WHERE THEY WORK AS DOCTORS OR TEACHERS. THERE A FEW THOUSAND STILL LIVE IN KASHMIR, TRYING TO MAKE ON WITH THEIR LIVES...
I USED TO KNOW PLENTY OF PANDITS WHO SUPPORTED THE RESISTANCE. SOME OF THEM REPORTED HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS AND WERE TARGETED BY THE INDIAN ARMY.

ANYWAY, THEY'RE GONE NOW. BUT THE NEIGHBORHOOD IS INCOMPLETE WITHOUT THEM.
OUR HOUSE IS NEXT DOOR, THE ONE WITH BLUE WINDOWS. IF YOU FEEL LIKE HAVING TEA AFTER YOU'RE DONE, DON'T HESITATE TO DROP BY.
WHAT THE HELL!
MY GRANDFATHER WAS BLIND AND WHENEVER THE ARMY SEEN HIM WE COULDN'T SEE WHERE THEY WERE GOING TO HIT HIM NEXT. THAT WAS HIS WORST FEAR... I WONDER WHAT THAT MACHINE WAS USED TO LIVE HERE. MADE OF THE SUN POINTED AT HIM...
POOR LUNATIC, PERHAPS HE OPENED THE DOOR FOR HIS INAMORATO. GOD WHAT A WEBB.
HOW MANY PEOPLE DO YOU THINK WERE KILLED, APPROXIMATELY?
I DON'T KNOW. FIGURED VERY-- DEPENDS WHO'S TALKING, REALLY.

A FEW YEARS AGO, A GROUP OF PANDITS RECKONED IT WAS AROUND 250.
PEOPLE ON T.V. DEBATES SAY AROUND 200,000 AND AROUND 500,000 REFUGEES.
THOSE WHO ARE AROUND MY AGE REMEMBER 600 OR MORE DEAD.
BUT KASHMIRI MUSLIMS/MUSLIM-ATHEISTS/READERS OF KARL MARX AND PROL-PLEBEIAN-OF-THE-FUCKED-UP-WORLD, SAY THAT THE SLAUGHTER OF KASHMIRIS UNDER MILITARY RULE IN THE EARLY 90S WAS LEAD BY THE INDIAN GOVERNOR OF KASHMIR. HE EVEN HELPED TO EVACUATE KASHMIRI WINDOWS DURING THE 90S, SO THAT IT WOULD LOOK LIKE THEY WERE DRIVEN FROM KASHMIRI MUSLIMS.
PANDITS IN THE SAME DEBATES NEVER AGREE WITH THAT NARRATIVE. THEY CALL IT A CONSPIRACY THEORY.
ONE THING I'M CERTAIN ABOUT IS THAT MOST PEOPLE FROM BOTH RAWALPINDI, PAK. RELUCTANT TO CONDONE EACH OTHER'S GRIEF.
INSTEAD, IN THE SHADOWS OF THE MEDIA, STATISTICS OF DEATH BECOME CHIPS TO PLAY AND WIN DEBATES.
DO YOU STILL HAVE THE DOINT?
HOW MANY KASHMIRI MUSLIMS DO YOU THINK DIED IN THE 90S?

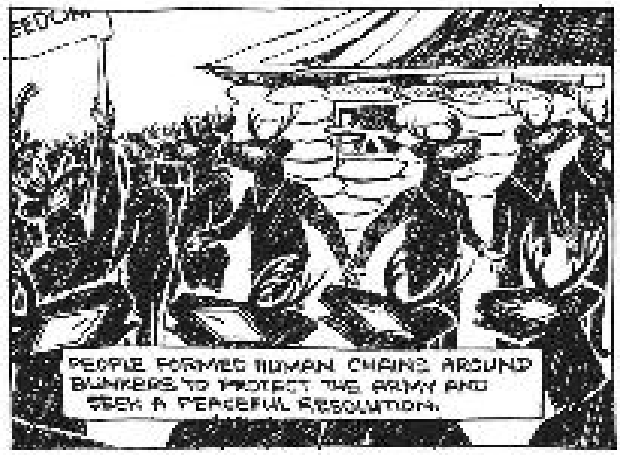
I'D HAVE TO BE THE PRESIDENT OF THE GRAVEDIGGERS' ASSOCIATION IF THERE IS ONE TO KNOW FOR CERTAIN.
BUT GIVEN WHAT I'VE SEEN, READ AND HEARD SO FAR, I CAN ONLY PUT IT THIS WAY.. A WANNABE JOURNALIST OR A HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVIST WOULD SAY 80,000 DEAD, 40,000 ORPHANS, 12,000 CASES OF ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES.
LATER ON, AFTER GETTING A JOB, THEY MIGHT SAY 60,000 DEAD, 30,000 ORPHANS, ETC.
JOURNALISTS FROM INDIA STICK WITH 30,000 TO 40,000 DEAD MOSTLY — PROBABLY FOLLOWED BY A SMALL COMMERCIAL BREAK WITH ADS ABOUT TWO DIFFERENT WHITENING CREAMS FOR MEN AND WOMEN...
THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT BANDS ABOUT 20,000 TO 30,000 TERRORISTS SLAIN, INCLUDING THE FOREIGN ONES.
PRO-RESISTANCE GROUPS PREVIOUSLY STICK WITH 100,000 MARTYRS, 20,000 CASES OF ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES AND SO ON.
FOREIGN JOURNALISTS AND ACADEMICS TRY TO SOUND SERIOUS BY USING UNIQUE FIGURES LIKE 44,000 OR 72,000 AND PUTTING WORDS LIKE "ALLEGEDLY" NEXT TO THE NAME OF EYEWITNESSES AND USING "ADMINISTRATION" INSTEAD OF "OCCUPATION". SAVES THEIR BOSSES FROM GETTING DEPORTED FROM INDIA.
THE U.N. IS STILL MONITORING THE SITUATION.
BASICALLY, NO ONE'S REALLY COUNTED THE DEAD. YOU CAN ALWAYS BARGAIN WITH THE STATISTICS. GIVE OR TAKE, GIVE OR TAKE. YOU KNOW?

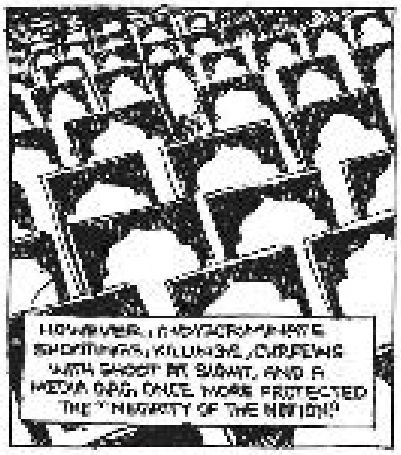
DAVID, CAN I INTERVIEW YOU ON CAMERA?
NAH, PARLEY. CROWDS AND CAMERAS ARE MY WORST FEARS.
YOU CAN LOOK AT ME AND NOT INTO THE CAMERA.
THEN I'LL TURN INTO A POST.
FINE, THEN. HOW ABOUT WE GO TO SOME VILLAGERS? I'M CURIOUS ABOUT THEIR STORIES.
I WISH I COULD, BUT I NEED TO DO MY DAILY CARTOON COLUMN...
ALRIGHT, I'LL GO ALONE. BUT I'LL NEED YOUR CELL PHONE—I DROPPED MINE IN SOME WATER.
NO PROBLEM, MY LOVE. I WISH YOU COULD PUT ME IN YOUR POCKET LIKE THIS PHONE, AND WHEN I RING I WET TO TOUCH YOUR SOFT, SWEET LIPS!
THINKING ABOUT YER, IS LIKE A DELICIOUS MEAL. BEFORE A PRISONER GETS SENT TO THE GALLOWS, A POPULATION OF MILLIONS OF PEOPLE SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN REDUCED TO THE 7 MEMBERS OF A FAMILY...
MARTIN HANSEN
AKHTAR, ADEL, BILAL, SHAHNAZ, MAMMA, FADA AND MUNNU.

WHEN PERVEZ LEFT KASHMIR, HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF KASHMIRIS REPLACED HER COMPANY, HAND IN HAND MARCHING FROM ONE CORNER OF THE VALLEY TO ANOTHER, SEEKING SALVATION FROM THE INDIAN OCCUPATION.
NO INDIA, NO PAKISTAN, WE WANT FREEDOM!
INDIA OUT!
BAN KI-MOON, WHERE ARE YOU?
THE RESENTMENT AGAINST THE INDIAN OCCUPATION RESURFACED WHEN THE GOVERNMENT TRANSFERED 99 ACRES OF GREENBELT LAND CLOSE TO THE HOLY AMARNATH CAVE IN PAHALGAM TO A HINDU SHRINE BOARD TO ACCOMMODATE ANNUAL AMARNATH PILGRIMS.

THE GOVERNMENT RESCINDED THE ORDER. BUT THEN RIGHT-WING HINDU GROUPS FROM INDIA—EQUIPPED WITH KNIVES, TRIDENTS, PETROL BOMBS AND SULPHURIC ACID—ATTACKED SALEEM, TRUCK DRIVERS AND SOUGHT TO BLOCK THE ONLY HIGHWAY THAT CONNECTS KASHMIR WITH INDIA, RESULTING IN SHORTAGES OF BASIC ESSENTIALS AT THE MARKETS.

GO BACK TO INDIA
INDEPEND
KASHMIRIS WITH APPLE TRUCKS HARDLY TO THE L.o.C. TO BRING DOWN THE CEASE FIRE BORDER THAT DIVIDES THE LAND INTO PAKISTAN-OCCUPIED KASHMIR AND INDIA-OCCUPIED KASHMIR, HOPING TO BREAK OPEN THE BERLIN WALL THAT BLOCKED THE TRADITIONAL ROUTES CONNECTING THE VALLEY WITH THE REST OF THE WORLD.


PEOPLE FORMED HUMAN CHAINS AROUND BUNKERS TO PROTECT THE ARMY AND SEEK A PEACEFUL RESOLUTION.


HOWEVER, INDISCRIMINATE SHOOTINGS, KILLINGS, CURFEWS WITH SHOOT AT SIGHT, AND A MEDIA GAG, ONCE MORE PROTECTED THE "INTEGRITY OF THE NATION."

PRISONS NOW SEEM TO BE THE ONLY PLACES TO MAKE NEW FRIENDS AND MINGLE WITH OLD FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS.

THE BLUE SKY NOW SEEMS THE ONLY SIGN THAT THE REST OF THE WORLD IS OUT THERE.

SAYAD NOW FINDS SECRET COMPANY IN THE MISERIES OF DINERS.
MMMM, YOU MUST ALSO WATCH ALONG CHILDHOOD BY TARKOVSKY, I THINK YOU'LL LOVE IT!
I WISH THERE WERE CINEMAS IN KASHMIR! I WANT TO WATCH MY FIRST MOVIE IN THE THEATRE WITH YOU—HOLDING YOUR HAND.
I WONDER HOW SARAKA'S DIRECTOR MISSED KASHMIR. I FEEL REJUVENATED BY THE LUSH GREEN LANDSCAPE, MOUNTAINS, CRAZY CLOUDS AND THOSE CLEAR STREAMS IN KUPWARA VILLAGE.
YOU'RE SO BRAVE, PRISLEY—I'VE NEVER BEEN TO KUPWARA! IT'S SCARY UP NORTH, PEOPLE GET KILLED EVERY NOW AND THEN. THE ARMY THERE BEATS OUR G.K. REPORTERS WHENEVER THEY GO ANY INVESTIGATING OUT THERE. IT'S NEAR THE L.O.C. YOU KNOW.
I'M SO PROUD OF YOU!
KASHMIR

THERE'S JUST ONE PROBLEM, SIR'D. DON'T BE MAD AT ME. I WAS SO DISTRACTED IN PLUMBING THE VANDALISM OF THE FOREST AND THE BREATHTAKING NATURAL BEAUTY THAT I LOST YOUR CELL PHONE SOMEWHERE.
TELL ME YOU'RE NOT SERIOUS!
COME ON, I'LL GIVE YOU MY MOBILE PHONE. IT'S NO BIG DEAL.
IT IS...
WHY DIDN'T YOU TELL ME AS SOON AS YOU LOST IT?
I TOLD YOU, I'M GIVING YOU MY PHONE. RELAX!
NOW I'LL HAVE TO REPORT TO THE POLICE BEFORE APPLYING FOR A DUPLICATE SIM CARD.
AND THEY'LL ASK WHAT I WAS DOING THERE, WHY? WHO? FUCK! WHY DID YOU LOSE IT IN THE FIRST PLACE?
YOU'RE OVER-REACTING!
OVERREACTING? DO YOU HAVE ANY CLUE ABOUT THE POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCE?
I'VE LOST MOBILES BEFORE!
WHERE'S EUROPE? AMERICA? THIS IS ANYWHERE. YOU NEED TO SUBMIT OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS – I HAD TO GIVE A PHOTOCOPY OF MY PASSPORT!
STOP FREAKING OUT!

FREAKING OUT?! WHAT IF THE POLICE OR THE ARMY FINDS MY MOBILE? THEY MIGHT THINK IT BELONGS TO A MILITANT—OR MAYBE THEY'LL MAKE UP A STORY, THEY'RE GOOD STORYTELLERS. WHAT IF SOMEONE MISUSES MY PHONE? WHY THE POLICE MIGHT CHECK WHO OWNS THE SIM— I'M FUCKED! THINKS, PRISLEY!
YOU'RE BEING PARANOID!
REALLY? THE WORLD IS NOT ALL ABOUT THE WEST. PEOPLE CAN'T EVEN SNEEZE ON A MAP WITHOUT A VISA ON THEIR FUCKING INDIAN PASSPORT. MANY OF MY COLLEAGUES AND TEACHERS, LIKE THOUSANDS OF OTHER KASHMIRIS, HAVE BEEN DENIED A PASSPORT! AND EVEN IF THEY ISSUE YOU ONE, IT'S ONLY A MATTER OF TYPING A LINE OR TWO IN THE SYSTEM TO REVOKE IT.
DO YOU UNDERSTAND?
KASHMIR IS A PRISON, YOU KNOW. AND A PASSPORT IS YOUR BAIL CONTRACT, A REWARD FOR BEHAVING. GET IT? IT'S NOT ALL FUCKING BREEZY THOUGH HERE!
FUCK YOU, SPOOD! YOU'RE SUCH A HYPOCRITE!
OH YES, YOUR IGNORANCE HAS REALLY FUCKED ME UP NOW!
SHE FOUND OTHER SHOULDERS TO CRY ON.

INSTALLATION ART

BUT YOU SAID THAT THE POLICE IN DELHI HARASS KASHMIRIS!
YES, BUT I'M ONLY GOING FOR A WEEK.
AND I'VE BEEN INVITED BY THE PUBLIC SERVICE BROADCASTING TRUST, WHICH IS ONE OF THE BIGGEST CULTURAL ORGANISATIONS IN DELHI.
AND THE HABITAT CENTRE, WHERE THEY'RE GOING TO EXHIBIT MY ARTWORK, IS ONE OF THE MOST VIBRANT CULTURAL CENTRES IN INDIA. I'LL BE TOTALLY SAFE.
I'LL CALL YOU SEVERAL TIMES A DAY.

DAY 1.
RING RING
SEE YOU WERE FRANKING OUT FOR NO REASON. PEEBLE HERE. THINK YOU MIGHT VISIT!
THE HOUSE FEELS EMPTY WITHOUT YOU, MUNINN.
AND MY ACCOMMODATION IS QUITE COMFORTABLE. DIDN'T HOT, THOUGH...
DAY 2.
MAMMA, I MADE A REPLICA OF BRINAGER HERE. IT'S CALLED INSTALLATION ART.
I FRAMED MY CARTOONS, GRAPHIC NOVEL PAGES AND SOME PHOTOGRAPHS...
...THEN I HUNG THEM INSIDE LOOPS OF CONCERTINA WIRE.
DAY 3.
I WISH YOU COULD SEE MY ARTWORK HERE— THE CORNER WHERE MY WORKS ON DISPLAY LOOKS LIKE IT'S UNDER CURFEW!...
I EVEN PUT MUD AND STONES ON THE SHINY MARBLE FLOOR TO MAKE IT LOOK LIKE A WAR ZONE.
DAY 4.
GUESS WHAT? A GUY OF AROUND BILAL'S AGE HADN'T EVER SEEN RAZOR WIRE BEFORE. HE TOUCHED MY INSTALLATION AND ASKED WHAT IT WAS! HAHA!
I MISS YOU, MUNINN.

YES, I'M EATING WELL. I LIKE THE NOODLES AND DESSERTS HERE.
I KISS YOUR CARTOON IN GEA EVERY DAY. COME BACK NOW.
DAY 5
MAMMA, THE ORGANIZERS LOVE MY INSTALLATION ART, THEY WANT ME TO EXTEND IT! I'LL BE VERY BUSY WITH THAT AND MIGHT NOT BE ABLE TO CALL YOU FOR A FEW DAYS.
YES, YES, HOW MANY TIMES DO I HAVE TO SAY THAT I'M SAFE? PLEASE STOP FREAKING OUT.
PRAY IN THE BATAMALOC SHRINE IF YOU MISS ME. BUT REMEMBER, YOU'LL SEE MY DEPO FACE IF YOU WORRY ABOUT ME. I'LL BE BACK SOON. I MISS YOU VERY MUCH. LOVE YOU, GOTTA GO... BYE!
I LOVE YOU, TOO!

DAY 10.
I'M NEVER LETTING YOU GO ANYWHERE AGAIN, EVER.
MAMA, YOU ARE ACTING WEIRD. STOP CRYING. I WAS ONLY AWAY FOR 5 DAYS!
WERE YOU OKAY IN DELHI?
YES, MY EXHIBITION GOT A HUGE RESPONSE. PEOPLE WANTED TO KNOW MORE ABOUT KASHMIR. WIPE AWAY YOUR TEARS. I'M BACK.
YOU DON'T KNOW... A FEW DAYS AGO, SOME POLICEMEN CAME HERE. THEY WERE ASKING QUESTIONS ABOUT YOU.
WAS YOU SECRETS MOTHER?
HOW OLD IS HE?
WHY'S HE IN DELHI?
HOW MANY GONG DO YOU HAVE?
WAS ANYONE IN YOUR FAM'LY ARRESTED IN THE 90s?

YOU HADN'T CALLED FOR 4 DAYS... THERE WAS NO CARTMAN IN S.M., EITHER. I WAS SO WORRIED ABOUT YOU.
I THOUGHT THE WORST. YOU'RE MY WORLD, YOU KNOW.
I CAN'T BELIEVE THOSE BASTARDS TOOK HERE AS WELL...
"THE MARATH CENTRE IS HUGE. THERE ARE SO MANY GUEST HOUSES, AUDITORIUMS, PYRAMIDATRICES AND ART GALLERIES THERE!"
"MY INSTALLATION WAS ON DISPLAY IN THE STEIN AUDITORIUM."

"I'D DRAW A CARTOON IN THE EVENING..."
"PHOTOGRAPH IT..."
"AND THEN E-MAIL IT TO US FROM A NEARBY INTERNET CAFE."
THAT EVENING WHEN I CALLED YOU IN A RUSH, THE E-MAIL UPLOAD WAS TAKING TIME AS USUAL, SO I WAS CHECKING MY WEBSITE AND BROWSING FOR NEWS ABOUT KASHMIR.
INTERNET
PING PING
BLASTS? WHERE?
ARE YOU HOME?
HELLO? HELLO? CAN YOU HEAR ME?
I'M STILL IN THE CAFE... NO, I WON'T LEAVE...
HELLO? HELLO?
"SEVERAL BOMBS HAD EXPLODED IN DELHI MARKETS, EVERYONE IN THE CAFE PANICKED.

"WHILE TALKING ABOUT THE BLASTS AND THE NUMBER OF DEATHS, THEY TURNED TOWARDS ME AND PEERED OVER MY SHOULDER, CHECKING WHAT I WAS BREWING!"
ARE YOU A KASHMIRI?
LET US SEE YOUR PASSPORT!
I'M A KASHMIRI, BUT I ONLY HAVE MY IDENTITY CARD WITH ME. I'M A CARTOONIST.
WHERE ARE YOU STAYING IN DELHI?
MY CARTOONS ARE ON DISPLAY AT THE INTERNATIONAL CENTRE NEARBY.
"THE OWNER OF THE CAFE' PHOTOCOPIED MY IDENTITY CARD!"
WHAT WERE YOU BUFFING FOR?
I WAS CHECKING THE NEWS AND SENDING MY DAILY CARTOON TO THE NEWSPAPER IN SRINAGAR.
"BUT THEY WERE STILL SUSPICIOUS!"

CAN YOU GIVE ME THE LIST OF THE WEBSITES YOU WERE BROWSING?
WHY SHOULD WE TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THIS BOY? CALL THE POLICE AND LET THEM VERIFY HIM!
PRR!
YES, SIR... FINE.
"SO THE DINNER CALLED THE POLICE?"
PLEASE CALL THE HABITAT CENTRE— THEY'LL TELL YOU ALL ABOUT ME!
"HE INSTRUCTED ME NOT TO LEAVE."
PLEASE! MY PHONE ISN'T ON ROAMING...
PLEASE, I BEG YOU...
"AND THEN THE POLICE RUSHED INTO THE CAFE."
WHERE IS HE?
HERE, MADAM.

PACK YOUR STUFF, YOU BASTARD!
"SHE BARELY LOOKED AT MY IDENTITY CARD. I SHIVERED WITH FEAR."

"WHILE I PACKED MY STUFF, I WROTE THE CONTACT NUMBER OF THE CO-ORDINATOR OF MY EXHIBITION ON MY ARM...."

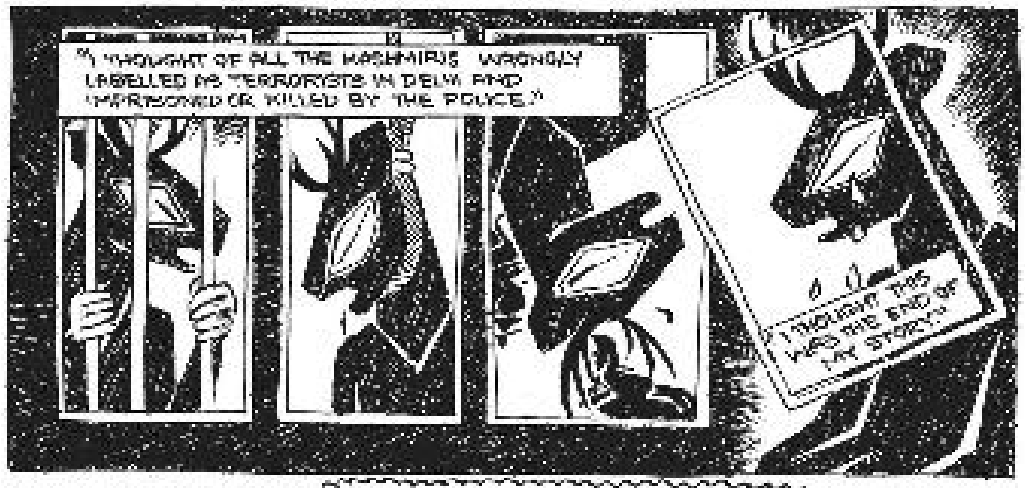
"AND SHOVED THE MEMORY CARD FROM MY CAMERA INTO MY POCKET. IT HAD ALL THE PICTURES OF MY INSTALLATION ART ON IT—THE ONLY PROOF OF MY INNOCENCE."

OUT, FUCKER!
LISTEN TO ME, PLEASE, PLEASE!

"OUTSIDE, A FEW HUNDRED SPECTATORS HAD GATHERED TO WATCH THE TERRORIST BEING CAUGHT."

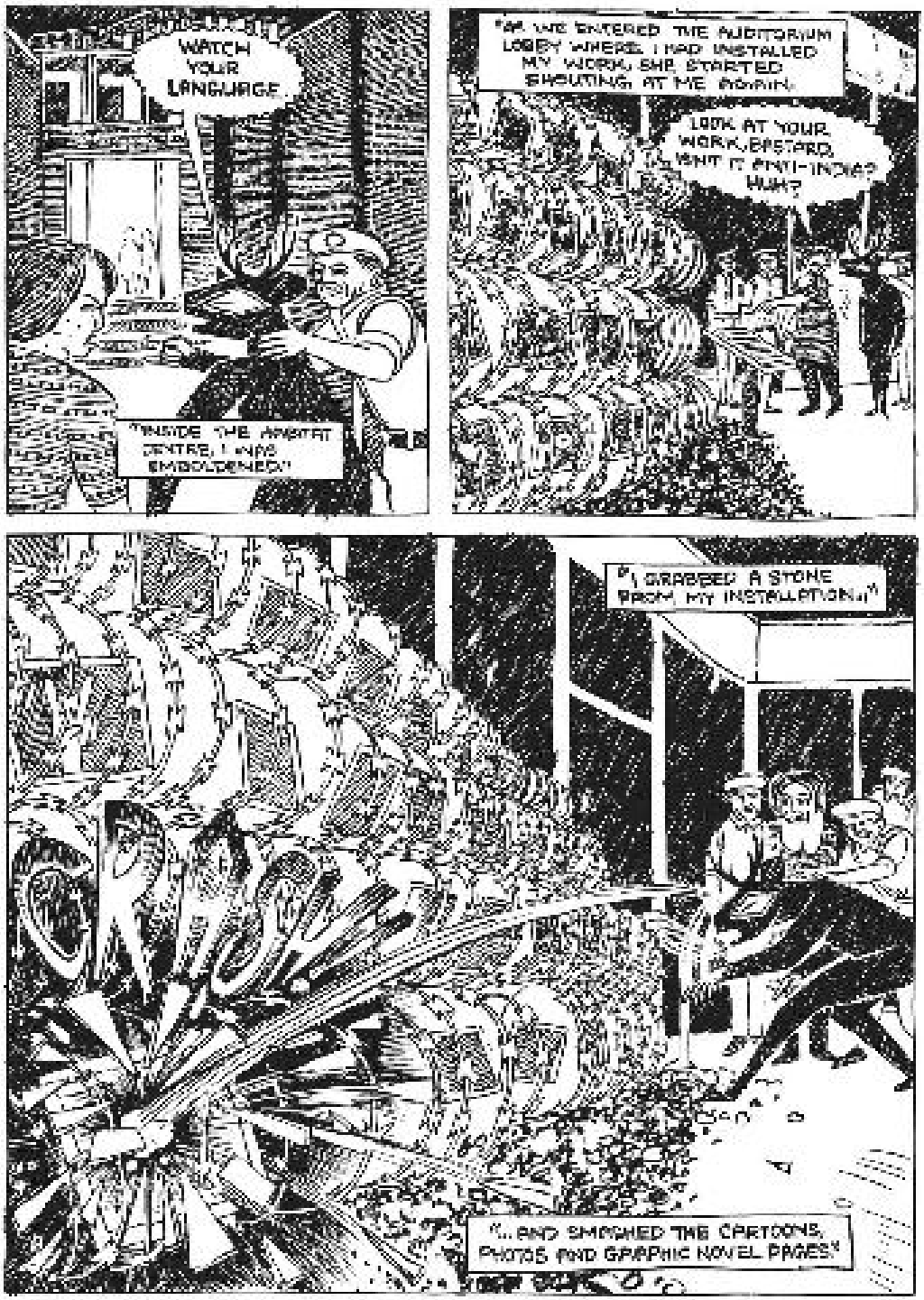
SHUT THE FUCK UP, YOU FUCKING KASHMIRI!
I CAUSED A TRAFFIC JAM!!
POLICE STATION
BUT NO ONE HEARD ME!!
THE POLICE OFFICER THEN USED THE EVIDENCE AGAINST ME!
HE WAS LOOKING AT A WEBSITE WITH DIAGRAMS & MAPS ON IT!
HE WAS SEARCHING FOR INFORMATION ABOUT KASHMIR.
HE HAD A CAMERA.

"I THOUGHT OF RUNNING FROM THE POLICE STATION. THE HABITAT CENTRE WAS ONLY ABOUT 50 YARDS AWAY!"
EVEN IF THEY SHOOT ME, I'LL MAKE IT.


"I THOUGHT OF ALL THE KASHMIRIS WRONGLY LABELLED AS TERRORISTS IN DELHI AND IMPRISONED OR KILLED BY THE POLICE."
I THOUGHT THIS WAS THE END OF MY STORY!

"I HAD NOTHING TO LOSE."
I WAS INVITED HERE! I'M AN ARTIST, I'M KNOWN IN KASHMIR! REMEMBER THAT, AND THEN GO AHEAD! GO AHEAD, DO WHAT YOU WANT TO ME! SHOOT ME AND LABEL ME A TERRORIST!

YES, HE'S HERE.
"THEN A POLICEWOMAN IN CIVVIES, CARRYING SEVERAL WIRELESS HANDSETS, APPEARED FROM THE COMMODORE."
"SHE TRIED CALLING THE HABITAT CENTRE..."
"...BUT THE PHONE NETWORK WAS JAMMED."
"I SAT THERE UNTIL I'D EATEN ALL MY FINGERNAILS."
MADAM, THE HABITAT CENTRE'S ONLY 5 MINUTES AWAY. IF YOU COME WITH ME, I'LL GIVE YOU A PRINTING.
YOU BASTARD. YOU SPEAK SUCH NICE HINDI, WHY DO YOU HAVE A PROBLEM WITH INDIA?
"10 OR 15 MINUTES LATER, THEY GRABBED ME BY MY COLLAR AND TOOK ME TO THE HABITAT CENTRE."
THANK YOU, THANK YOU!
SHUT THE FUCK UP! WHY DO YOU WASHINGS HAVE SUCH A SOFT SPOT FOR TERRORISTS?


WATCH YOUR LANGUAGE
"INSIDE THE ARMRAT CENTRE, I WAS EMBOLDENED!"
"AS WE ENTERED THE AUDITORIUM LOBBY WHERE I HAD INSTALLED MY WORK, SHE STARTED SHOUTING AT ME AGAIN.
LOOK AT YOUR WORK, BASTARD, WHAT IS ANTI-INDIA? HUH?
"I GRABBED A STONE FROM MY INSTALLATION..."
"...AND SMASHED THE CARTOONS, PHOTOS AND GRAPHIC NOVEL PAGES."

"WITH ALL THE NOISE, EVERYONE INSIDE THE AUDITORIUM RUSHED INTO THE LOBBY. AND THE POLICE RAN AWAY!"

I WANTED TO COME BACK HERE THE VERY NEXT DAY. BUT THE GUARDS AT THE HABITAT CENTRE WERE INSTRUCTED BY THE POLICE NOT TO LET ME LEAVE THE PREMISES FOR A FEW DAYS. AND THAT'S WHEN POLICE HERE MUST HAVE QUESTIONED YOU.
IT'S GOOD TO BE HOME.

ENDANGERED
SPECIES

MAMMA, I'M ON MY WAY. I HAD TO DRAW AN EXTRA CARTOON TODAY. YES, I'M ALRIGHT.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN? YOU HAVE TO SEE THE DOCTOR TODAY, OR THE SITUATION'S GOING TO GET WORSE.
DOWN WITH INDIA!
BRING THE CULPRITS TO BOOK!
WE WANT JUSTICE!
HE SAID THERE'S NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT? SO WHAT? HE'S JUST A PHARMACIST. BESIDES, HE'S ALREADY KILLED A FEW PATIENTS WITH THE WRONG MEDICATION. YOU CAN'T TRUST HIM.
MAMMA, I'M GOOD AS LONG AS ALL YOU BROTHERS ARE SAME. ONCE THE SITUATION IS NORMAL, YOU CAN TAKE ME TO THE DOCTOR, PLEASE.

I HAVE A PRESS CARD. WE'RE GOING TO THE DOCTOR NOW. YOU'RE JUST WASTING PRECIOUS TIME. YOU LOOK DEAD! IT'S GOING TO GET WORSE. TRUST ME. COME ON.
GET INSIDE. A BULLET WON'T CHECK YOUR PRESS CARD.
I TOLD YOU, MUMMY, I JUST GOT THE MEDICINE.
BUT HE'S JUST A PHARMACIST, NOT A DOCTOR!
THE PHARMACIST'S MEDICINE MASKED WHATEVER ILLNESS MAMMA HAD DURING THAT UNCERTAIN SUMMER.
HOWEVER, IN THE WINTER SHE COMPLAINED OF BONE-CHILLING COLD. EVEN FOUR FIREPOTS COULDN'T WARM HER UP.
SO SHE AGREED TO VISIT A DOCTOR.
HOW MANY CHILDREN DO YOU HAVE?
FIVE.
HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN FEELING THE NUMBNESS?
IT'S BEEN ALMOST A YEAR.
I SEE... GET AN ULTRASOUND DONE, AND MEANWHILE TAKE THESE INJECTIONS ONCE A WEEK.

SEE? I TOLD YOU I WAS FINE. I JUST NEED TO HAVE A FEW INJECTIONS, THEN I'LL BE COOKING FOR YOU AGAIN.
THE INJECTIONS HELPED HER TO GET THROUGH THE WINTER.
BUT BY SPRING 2000, HER LEFT SIDE WOULD GO TOTALLY NUMB. AND SHE LOOKED YELLOW WITH DARK PURPLE CIRCLES AROUND HER EYES.
MEMMAW, I THINK YOU SHOULD SEE THE DOCTOR AGAIN.
'TIS THAT THE GLOOMY WEATHER, WINTER'S GONE ON SO LONG. THIS YEAR, PLEASE LET ME BE.
BUT YOU LOOK SO PALE!
DOCTOR, DOCTOR, DOCTOR! WHY DON'T YOU DO THE DISHES AND HELP CHONNEY. IF YOU CARE SO MUCH? AND SWAYE, WOULD YOU PLEASE STOP SMOKING FOR CROPPY'S SAKE!
LEAVE THE DISHES IN THE SINK, WE'LL CLEAN THEM TOMORROW WHEN THE WATER'S HOT.
GOOD NIGHT!
YOU'VE BECOME SO CRANKY LATELY. YOUR CHILDREN LOVE YOU. YOU SHOULD SEE A DOCTOR.
I KNOW, BUT SHE ASKED FOR AN WTPRGOUND LAST TIME AND I GOT SCARED.

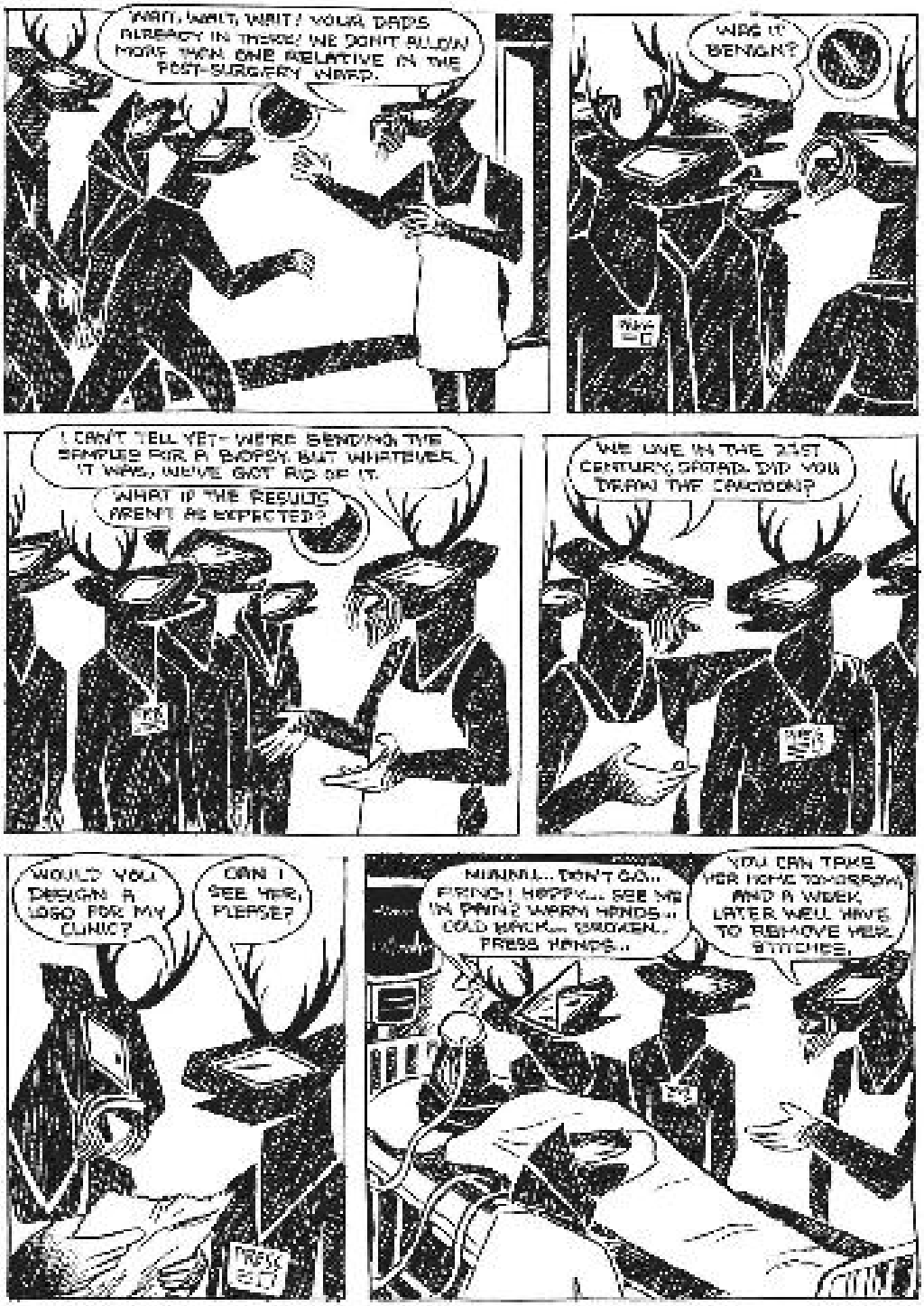
YOU TALK LIKE A KID.
WELL, YOU DON'T HAVE A TREASURE TROVE UNDER YOUR ASS, EITHER. MY CHILDREN ARE COMING. I DON'T WANT TO SELL THE HOUSE FOR MY TREATMENT. WHAT IF THE ULTRASOUND DETECTS SOMETHING?
YOU THINK THEY'LL BE BETTER OFF WITHOUT YOU?
BUT I DON'T WANT MY CHILDREN TO BE HOMELESS IN THIS AWFUL MESS. I SEE MANY MEAN DOGS IN MY DREAMS LATELY. I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S COMING.
GUIYA, PROMISE ME, I WANT TO SEE MUNNU HAPPY, HE'S THE YOUNGEST. IF SOMETHING HAPPENS TO ME, YOU'LL MAKE SURE THAT HE'S HAPPY, GET HIM MARRIED TO A NICE GIRL.
WHAT THE HELL? I HEARD EVERYTHING. WE'RE GETTING THE GODDAMN ULTRASOUND DONE RIGHT FREAKING NOW. YOU'RE SUCH A LIAR, MAMMA.
NOT NOW, MUNNU, NOT NOW.
I'M NOT MUNNU ANYMORE!
YOU'LL ALWAYS BE MUNNU TO ME.

I FAKED FOR AN M.R., AS WELL...
BUT DOCTOR, I FELT BETTER AFTER THE INJECTIONS.
BUT YOU'RE NOT A DOCTOR YET!
I'M TELLING YOU, MUNNA, I DON'T NEED AN M.R.!
SHUT UP
GO BACK TO INDIA!
WHAT SALARY DO YOU GET TO WEAR THAT INDIAN UNIFORM, HUH? I'LL GIVE YOU DOUBLE IF YOU SUCK MY DICK!
ISLAM IS OUR MARRIAGE TO PAKISTAN!
WE WANT FREEDOM!
NO INDIA, NO PAKISTAN, WE WANT FREEDOM!
INDIAN DOGS, GET OUT!
YOU BAG OF CHARCOAL! YOU WANNA SHOOT ME, HUH? GO AHEAD AND MAKE YOUR SISTER A WIDOW, MOTHERFUCKER!
LET'S CALL BILAL AT LEAST!

ARE YOU HER ELDEST SON?
YES
I CAN SEE A MASS FORMATION, BUT IT'S NOT CLEAR WHAT IT IS. SHE WON'T HAVE TO GO FOR A BIOPSY.
BUT THAT TAKES A FEW WEEKS. I'LL ARRANGE RUSHING HER TO A HOSPITAL WITHOUT ANY FURTHER DELAY AND GETTING IT REMOVED THROUGH SURGERY.
SURGERY?
YES, IT COULD BE DANGEROUS IF IT ISN'T DEALT WITH NOW. THE BIOPSY CAN BE DONE AFTERWARDS.
HMM, YOU SHOULD HAVE COME HERE EARLIER. WE SHOULDN'T WASTE ANY MORE TIME. ADMIT HER TODAY FOR THE BLOOD TESTS, AND WE'LL GO FOR THE SURGERY IMMEDIATELY— BEFORE THESE PROTECTS ESCALATE.
CITY HOSPITAL

BE A MAN, SATAD - I LOOK AT YOUR CARTOONS EVERY DAY - I THOUGHT YOU'D BE NO DAY SO - YOUR MOTHER & WILL BE FINE, STOP CRYING. I OPERATE ON SUCH PATIENTS ALL THE TIME.
I'M NOT CRYING, IT'S THE SMOKE EVERYWHERE.
BILAL, DON'T STEP OUTSIDE. IT IS NOT SAFE. AND MAKE SURE YOUR BROTHERS STAY HERE ONLY.
YOU SHOULD DRAW A CARTOON ABOUT PATIENTS GETTING TEARGAS INSTEAD OF ANAESTHESIA! HAHA!
SHAWNPZ, MUNNU, PULL YOURSELVES TOGETHER. MASEENA IS FINE.
DID YOU DRAW TODAY'S CARTOON?
I DON'T KNOW, BILAL. I CAN'T THINK.

WHY DON'T YOU DRAW WHILE MAMMA'S IN THE THEATRE. STOP BITING YOUR NAILS, IT'S BAD LUCK!
WHY DID THE DOCTOR MAKE US SIGN THE CONSENT FORM?
THAT'S JUST A FORMALITY FOR EVERY SURGERY. COME ON, LET'S HAVE TEA IN THE CANTEEN.
WOULD YOU PLEASE GIVE ME A FEW NAPKINS AND A PEN?
HERE, I GOT YOU A PEN AND PAPER. YOU SHOULD DRAW INDIA WEARING THE SKULL OF KASHMIR AS A CROWN, WITH THE TAGLINE "INTEGRAL PART"!
MAMMA LOVES YOU MORE THAN ANY OF US.
YOU MUST PUT A SMILE ON YOUR FACE WHEN SHE WAKES UP.
BULALA, IT'S DONE. MAMMA'S IN THE POST-OPERATION ROOM.


WAIT, WAIT, WAIT! YOUR DRDS ALREADY IN THERE! WE DON'T ALLOW MORE THAN ONE RELATIVE IN THE POST-SURGERY WARD.
WAS IT BENIGN?
I CAN'T TELL YET– WE'RE SENDING THE SAMPLES FOR A BIOPSY. BUT WHATEVER IT WAS, WE'VE GOT RID OF IT.
WHAT IF THE RESULTS AREN'T AS EXPECTED?
WE LIVE IN THE 21ST CENTURY, GRANDA. DID YOU DRAW THE CARTOON?
WOULD YOU DESIGN A LOGO FOR MY CLINIC?
CAN I SEE HER, PLEASE?
MUMMY!... DON'T GO... FRING! HAPPY... SEE ME IN PAIN? WARM HANDS... COLD BACK... BROKEN... PRESS HANDS...
YOU CAN TAKE HER HOME TOMORROW AND A WEEK LATER WE'LL HAVE TO REMOVE HER STITCHES.

UNLIKE A FEW DAYS BEFORE, THE STREETS WERE CALM AND EMPTY THE NEXT MORNING.
GET OUT OF THE VEHICLE, NOW!
I'VE GOT A PATIENT, SIR. A PATIENT.
I SAID OUT!
BLEEDIN' MARIAN! ARE YOU A TOURIST? DON'T YOU KNOW THAT THIS PLACE IS UNDER CURFEW?
MY WIFE'S A PATIENT.
PLEASE DON'T BEAT MY CHILDREN. I UNDERWENT SURGERY YESTERDAY.
CAN'T YOU HEAR? I SAID GET OUT!
MAMMA, DON'T MOVE. STAY THERE. WE'RE FINE. DON'T MOVE.
SIR, PLEASE. HER WOUND IS STILL FRESH.

HOME WAS LESS THAN A MILE AWAY. THE INDIAN ARMY WAS MERCIFUL— THE CURFEW WAS SHORT ON NIGHT.
BY AFTERNOON, THEY HAD MADE IT HOME SAFE.

TIME STOOD STILL. BUT EACH SUNRISE BROUGHT MORE AND MORE COLORED TO MAHMA'S FACE. THE WORLD FELT INTACT.
SEE THIS PHOTO, MUNNUR? I EVEN BOUGHT CLOTHES FOR A DAUGHTER. I WAS SO SURE THAT I'D GIVE BIRTH TO A DAUGHTER WHEN YOU WERE BORN.

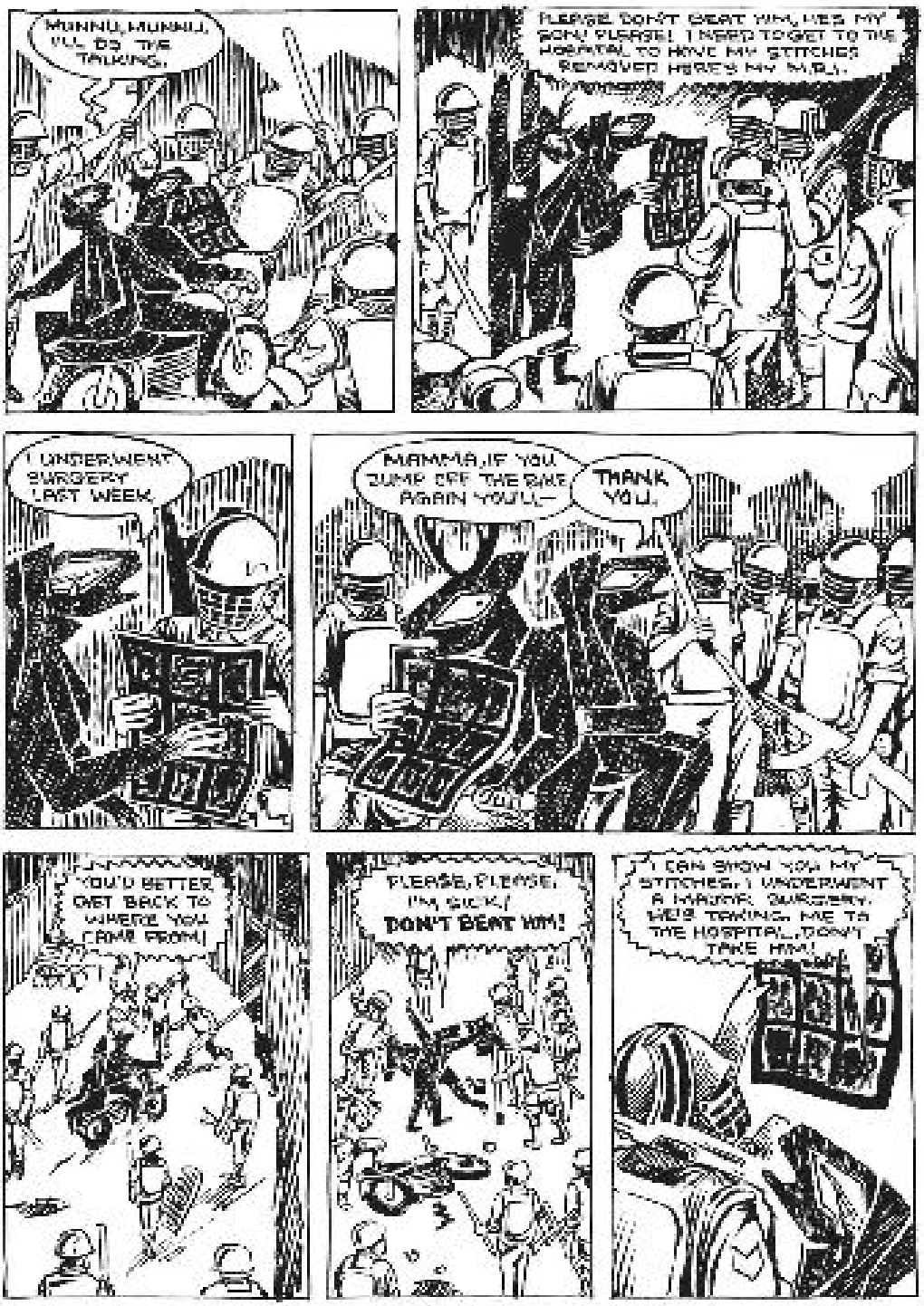
I TALKED TO THE DOCTOR; HE'S GOING TO SEND AN AMBULANCE.
CAN'T WE WAIT FOR A COUPLE OF DAYS?

HE SAID THAT WOULD LEAD TO COMPLICATIONS. BESIDES, WHO KNOWS? THIS CURFEW MIGHT LAST FOR MONTHS!

THINK THE AMBULANCE IS OUTSIDE.
RING
RING

GHULAM, THE ARMY WRECKED THE AMBULANCE! I DON'T KNOW HOW I CAN HELP ANY MORE.
I'M SO SORRY TO HEAR THAT. CAN I REMOVE HER STITCHES MYSELF?
ARE YOU SERIOUS? IT WAS A MAJOR SURGERY. MAYBE YOU CAN SHOW HER MEDICAL REPORT TO THE POLICE. THEY MIGHT ALLOW YOU THROUGH.
ASK HIM IF IT IS SAFE TO TAKE HER ON A MOTORBIKE.
CAN YOU PLEASE COME HERE? I CAN PAY YOU ANYTHING.
I WISH I COULD, BUT I'M STUCK HERE. DO WHAT I TOLD YOU, SOD WILLING, THEY'LL LET YOU PASS.
CAN WE WAIT FOR A FEW MORE DAYS?
IT'S ALREADY LATE. WE CAN'T WAIT ANY LONGER... IT WAS A MAJOR SURGERY.
I DON'T SEE ANY OTHER OPTION; I'LL HAVE TO TAKE HER TO THE HOSPITAL.
PAPA, YOU DON'T KNOW HOW TO DRIVE THIS BIKE. I'LL TAKE HER.
I TOLD YOU, THIS WAS THE WRONG TIME FOR SURGERY!
I'LL TAKE HER ON THE BIKE. I HAVE A PRESS CARD.
MUNNU, THEY HAVEN'T EVEN SPARED PHOTO-JOURNALISTS! YOU'LL ONLY PROVOKE THEM MORE WITH YOUR PRESS CARD.
BUT WHY WOULD THEY LET YOU PASS, BILAL? AT LEAST THEY MIGHT THINK TWICE BEFORE BEATING MUNNU.

MUMMA, WE'LL PUT THE M.P.J. FILM OVER THE HEADLIGHT AND CARRY ALL THE MEDICINES WITH US. IF THEY STOP US I WILL SHOW THEM MY STITCHES. LET'S GO!
GOOD IDEA! I'LL SHAVE AND YOU WEAR SOME COLOURFUL CLOTHES, MAYBE RED – SO THEY CAN SPOT US FROM A DISTANCE.
DRIVE SLOWLY, HER WOUNDS STILL FRESH.
SAINT BATAMELOS WILL TAKE CARE OF US, DON'T BE AFRAID.
MAMMA! HOLD ME TIGHT.
MAMMA, WHEN I SHOUT "POTHOLE", HOLD YOUR BREATH TO AVOID THE DUSTS.


MUNNU, MUNNU, I'LL DO THE TALKING.
PLEASE DON'T BEAT HIM, HE'S MY SON! PLEASE! I NEED TO GET TO THE HOSPITAL TO HAVE MY STITCHES REMOVED. HERE'S MY M.R.I.
I UNDERWENT SURGERY LAST WEEK.
MAMMA, IF YOU JUMP OFF THE BIKE AGAIN YOU'LL—
THANK YOU.
YOU'D BETTER GET BACK TO WHERE YOU CAME FROM!
PLEASE, PLEASE, I'M SICK! DON'T BEAT HIM!
I CAN SHOW YOU MY STITCHES. I UNDERWENT A MAJOR SURGERY. HE'S TAKING ME TO THE HOSPITAL. DON'T TAKE HIM!

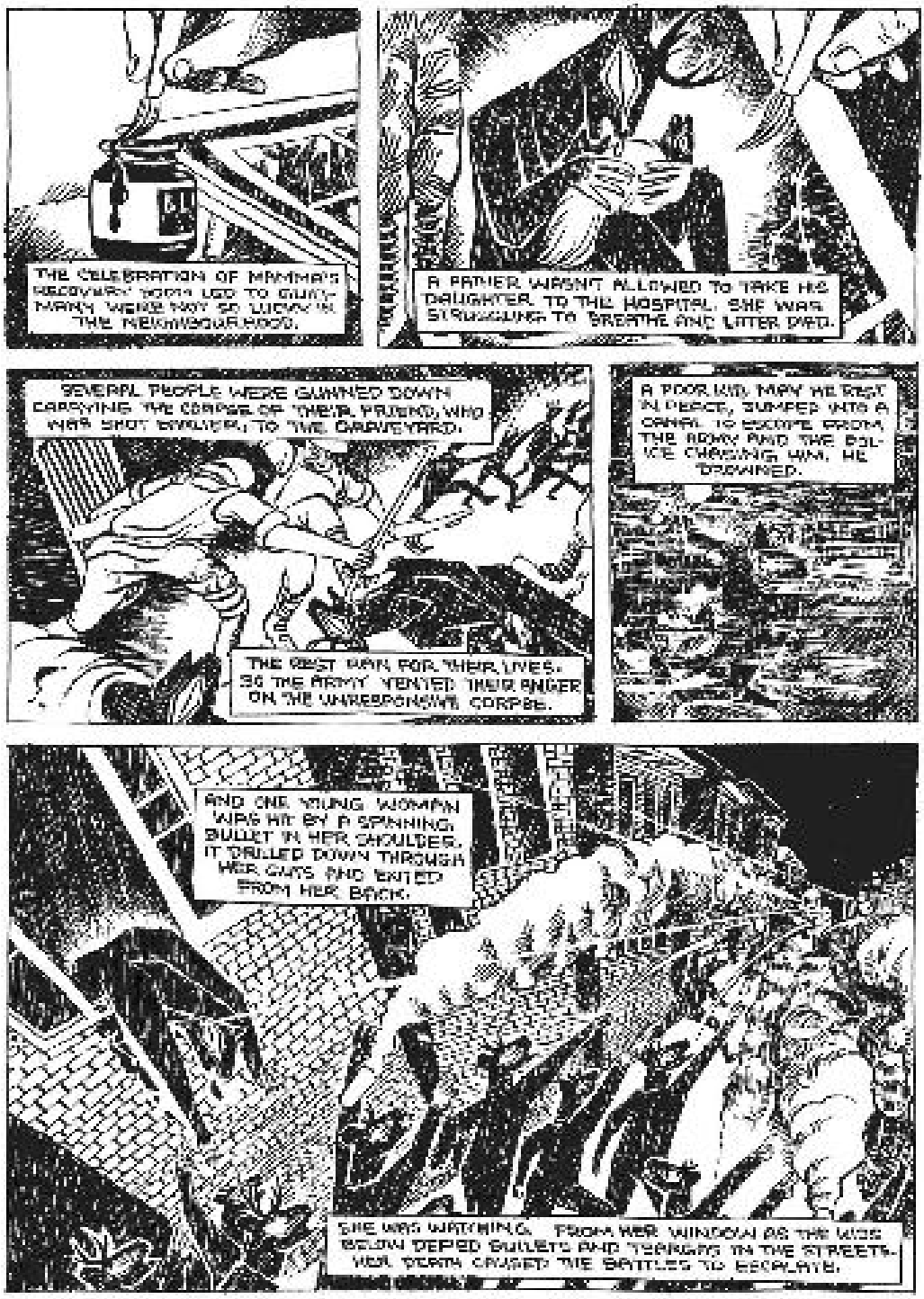
MAMMA, DON'T SHOUT SO LOUD. YOU'RE PUTTING A STRAIN ON YOUR WOUND.
POTHOLE!
THE AMBULANCE COULDN'T MAKE IT. HERE'S MY M.R.I. I NEED TO GET THE STITCHES REMOVED.
WE'RE ALMOST THERE—WE CAN'T GO BACK. PLEASE! I NEED TO GET MY STITCHES REMOVED. HERE'S MY MRI. I'M TAKING THESE TABLETS.
CITY HOSPITAL

CAN I BORROW A CIGARETTE, PLEASE?
AT LEAST SHOW SOME RESPECT TO YOUR MOTHER!
ouch!
WHAT DID THE DOCTOR SAY?
HE WANTS TO SEE YOU.
YES, YOUR MOTHER IS ABSOLUTELY FINE SO FAR. WE HAVEN'T GOT HER BIOPSY REPORT YET. UNFORTUNATELY, THE POSTAL SERVICE IS TOTALLY DISRUPTED DUE TO THE POLITICAL SITUATION. IF SHE COUGHS, VOMITS OR FEELS COLD, PUT HER HERE IMMEDIATELY. GOD IS THE ULTIMATE HEALER.
DID YOU DEMAND THAT LORD FOR MY CLINIC YET?
THAT DOCTOR KNOWS NOTHING. A COUGH IS USUALLY DUE TO THE ANAESTHESIA. TRUST ME. I HAD SURGERIES BEFORE YOU WERE BORN. I'D EAT KASHMIRI APPLES AND THE COUGH WOULD DISAPPEAR.
THE ARMY WERE FAMILIAR WITH THEIR STORY, SO THEY DIDN'T BOTHER THEM ON THEIR WAY BACK HOME.

HE JUST PULLED OUT THE STITCHES, AND THAT WAS IT! WE COULD EASILY HAVE DONE IT HERE!
WHERE ARE YOU GOING, MUNNU?
I NEED TO PEE.
WHO IS IT?
WHOCK WHOCK
I NEED SOME KASHMIRI APPLES. NOW.
THEY'RE ROTTING IN MY SHOP AND IN STRANDED TRUCKS. WOULD CHINESE PEARS DO? THEY LAST FOR MONTHS.
ARE THEY GOOD LIKE KASHMIRI APPLES?
EVEN BETTER, BUT VERY EXPENSIVE. YOU'LL GET ONLY 4 FOR 200 RUPEES.

GIVE ME 8. I WANT SOME CIGARETTES, TOO.
MAMMA HERE, KASHMIR APPLES.. I MEAN CHINESE PEARS. THEY'RE GOOD.
WHY DID YOU PUT YOUR LIFE AT RISK FOR THESE PEARS? WHY DIDN'T YOU BUY ME SOME POISON FOR GOOD MEASURE, HUH?
NEXT TIME, FOR SURE.
MAMMA WAS RIGHT. THE FRUITS IMPOSED A LIMITATION ON HER DRY COUGH.
TWO MONTHS LATER, SHE LOOKED 10 YEARS YOUNGER. THERE WAS NO NEED FOR THE BIOPSY REPORT TO CONFIRM THAT SHE WAS WELL.. SHE HAD TO LOSE SOME WEIGHT, THOUGH.
TAKE SOME REST, HASEENA!
YOU SHOULD JOIN HER, PAPA.

GLOBAL WARMING


THE CELEBRATION OF MAMMA'S RECOVERY WAS LOST TO GUILT. MANY WERE NOT SO LUCKY IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD.
A FATHER WASN'T ALLOWED TO TAKE HIS DAUGHTER TO THE HOSPITAL. SHE WAS STRUGGLING TO BREATHE AND LATER DIED.
SEVERAL PEOPLE WERE GUNNED DOWN CARRYING THE CORPSE OF THEIR FRIEND, WHO WAS SHOT EARLIER, TO THE GRAVEYARD.
THE REST RAN FOR THEIR LIVES. SO THE ARMY VENTED THEIR ANGER ON THE UNRESPONSIVE CORPSE.
A POOR KID, MAY HE REST IN PEACE, JUMPED INTO A CANAL TO ESCAPE FROM THE ARMY AND THE POLICE CHASING HIM. HE DROWNED.
AND ONE YOUNG WOMAN WAS HIT BY A SPINNING BULLET IN HER SHOULDER. IT DRILLED DOWN THROUGH HER GUTS AND EXITED FROM HER BACK.
SHE WAS WATCHING FROM HER WINDOW AS THE KIDS BELOW DODGED BULLETS AND TEARGAS IN THE STREETS. HER DEATH CAUSED THE BATTLES TO ESCALATE.

AROUND 120 CIVILIANS – MOSTLY YOUTHS IN THEIR TEENS AND TWENTIES – WERE SHOT IN THE SPAN OF THREE MONTHS.
MORE THAN 3000 WERE INJURED; MANY OF THEM WERE LEFT CRIPPLED.
SOME TEARGAS SHELLS EVEN FOUND THEIR WAY INTO THE HOSPITALS WHILE CHASING THE PROTESTORS.
MEANWHILE, A TOP MILITARY OFFICIAL DELIVERED US THE TIPE OF THE STORY ON THE TV.
OUR STRATEGY IS TO SHOOT AT THE LEGS SO AS TO DISPERSE THE PROTESTORS. THE TROUBLE IS, KIDS ARE SHORT, SO OUR BULLETS HIT THEIR HEADS.
THEY AREN'T PROTESTORS. THEY'RE "AGITATIONAL TERRORISTS"

WHEN SAWYER STEPPED OUT INTO THE STREET, IMPULSIVELY SHOUTING THE POPULAR FREEDOM SLOGANS HE'D PICKED UP IN HIS MOTHER TONGUE...
SMACK
...THE ARMY CAUGHT THE 8-YEAR-OLD BOY BREAKING THE LAW.
THEY INSERTED A BAMBOO STICK INTO HIS MOUTH, AND RAINED DOWN KICKS AND BLOWS WITH JACKBOOTS AND GUN BUTTS UNTIL HE BECAME JUST ANOTHER STATISTIC.
THEN THEY DUMPED THE DEAD KID INTO A LUMP OF NETTLES.
SPARKS, THE 2-DAY WAR SPARKED BY THE DEATH OF KOSHIMURA, YOUNGEST GENERATION.
FEBRUARY 22ND, 1968: SHOT BY ARMY RANGER AFTER AN ARGUMENT WITH A BORDER SECURITY FORCES OFFICER.
JANUARY 14TH, 1968: KILLED BY A TEARGAS SHELL.
...WHO WERE LURED BY A POLICEMAN TO MEET AN ARMY OFFICER ON THE PERTINENT OF GETTING THEM A JOB.
THE ARMY OFFICER TOOK THE BOYS TO THIS LOC AND SHOT THEM.
JUNE: CONFIRMED THE INITIAL REPORTS OF THE COLD-BLOODED MURDER OF THREE MISSING BOYS IN KUSHIMURA, NEAR THE LOC...
LATER ON AN ARMY SPOKESMAN ANNOUNCED THEIR DEATHS AS THREE FOREIGN TERRORISTS KILLED IN A GUN BATTLE.

AS THE NEWS SPREAD ACROSS THE VALLEY, THOUSANDS OF YOUNG BOYS POURED INTO THE STREETS, SHOUTING, FOR THE END TO THE INDIAN OCCUPATION OF KASHMIR.
POLICE AND ARMY RESPONDED WITH BULLETS AND TEARGAS, AIMED BELOW WAIST LEVEL AS USUAL...
ON JUNE 11, 15-YEAR-OLD TUFAIL WAS ON THE WAY HOME FROM HIS TUTOR WHEN A TEARGAS SHELL HIT HIM ON HIS HEAD. HIS DEATH WAS THE FINAL SPARK TO A TRAGIC SUMMER.
...AND THE YOUNG BOYS FELL LIKE TOPPLING DOMINOES.
HEY, BROTHER - IT'S ME, SPIRO. ARE YOU IN KASHMIR?
I NEED TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT A GRAPHIC NOVELLA I JUST MADE... YEAH, I READ JOE SACCO'S PALESTINE...
ENDANGERED SPECIES
IT'S ABOUT THE 2010 UPRISING...
YEAH, YEAH.
YOU KNOW HOW THE HANGUL* IS ENDANGERED BECAUSE ITS HABITAT'S BEEN WRECKED BY THE ARMY AND DEFORESTATION?
WELL, I DID A CARTOON IN 2000 OR 2006 IN WHICH I PUT A DEER AND A KASHMIRI NEXT TO EACH OTHER, WITH THE TAGLINE "ENDANGERED SPECIES"!
IN THIS GRAPHIC NOVELLA, I'VE MADE THE HANGULS HUMANOID TO NARRATE THE TALE OF KASHMIR.
* THE RED STAG DEER, NATIONAL ANIMAL OF KASHMIR.

I EVEN NAMED IT ENDANGERED SPECIES. NOW I WANT YOU TO EDIT IT AND FIND A PUBLISHER.
ARE YOU NUTS?!
WHAT? WHY?
NAME IT KASHMIR! INTIFADA!
WHAT DOES "INTIFADA" MEAN?
IT MEANS REVOLUTION. THE WORLD IS VERY AWARE OF THE ARAB SPRING AND THE INTIFADA IN EGYPT, CAIRO AND PALESTINE...
SO SHOULD I JUST NAME IT KASHMIR REVOLUTION?
YOU DON'T GET IT. IF YOU WANT THE WORLD TO KNOW ABOUT KASHMIR, USE THE POPULAR TERMINOLOGY.
BUT IT'S AN ARABIC WORD, ISN'T IT? WE PROMOT ARABS, AND IT WON'T SPRING HERE, EITHER. I'M WRITING ABOUT AN 8-YEAR-OLD BOY AND WE WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN AWARE OF SUCH A TERM. I'M GOING WITH ENDANGERED SPECIES TO HIGHLIGHT THOSE WHO'VE BEEN BORED OF THEIR HABITAT.
SAYID, USE INTIFADA! IT MAKES IT EASY FOR AN INTERNATIONAL AUDIENCE TO UNDERSTAND YOUR STORY.
MY STORY'S ABOUT KASHMIR. THEY SHOULD KNOW KASHMIR AS IT IS, NOT THROUGH A GENERALISING LENS OF INTIFADA.
BESIDES, THE WORLD ISN'T JUST EAST AND WEST. WHAT IF YOU WERE WRITING ABOUT THE FRENCH REVOLUTION, WOULD YOU CALL IT FRENCH INTIFADA? IT'S RIDICULOUS.
ENDANGERED SPECIES AND ENDANGERED SPECIES... LET THE WORLD KNOW ABOUT US, WE'RE HANGULS!
TO HELL WITH YOUR STORY! YOU COMPLETELY EXHAUST ME! IT IS SIMPLE! EITHER CALL IT KASHMIR INTIFADA OR FIND A PUBLISHER ON YOUR OWN!
BUT I DON'T WANT TO VISIT DELHI AGAIN...
CLICK
BEEP.. BEEP
HELLO? HELLO?

KASHMIR INTIFADA
IT WAS THE ONLY WAY TO SELL THE STORY...
KASHMIR INTIFADA
...OR THE BOOK WOULD HAVE ROTTED ON THE DRAWING TABLE.
CONGRATS, BRENDA! YOU'VE GOT A BIG PUBLISHER'S NAME ON YOUR C.V. NOW!
BROTHER WAS RIGHT- PUBLISHERS LOVED THE STORY AND DISTRIBUTED IT AS SOON AS THE CURFEWS WERE OVER...ALONG WITH MANY OTHER PIECES ABOUT THE SOLO UPRISING, WITH THE WORDS KASHMIR INTIFADA SOMEWHERE IN THE TITLE.
I RISKS WRITE ABOUT THAT 8-YEAR-OLD KID WHO WAS KILLED IN YOUR AREA. THE DAILY GUARDIAN WILL BE CRUSHING IT.
THE MAJORITY OF JOURNALISTS, SOLDIERLISTS-TURNED-INTELLECTUALS, ACADEMICS AND KASHMIR EXPERTS REFERRED TO 1989 AS THE KASHMIRI INTIFADA. IT BECAME A TREND.
BUT I NEED TO SEND THEM MY PERSONAL PHOTO TO GO ALONG WITH THE STORY. SINCE YOU STUDY ART, I THOUGHT YOU COULD TAKE A GOOD ONE.
CLICK
NOT SMILING, I SHOULD LOOK LIKE I'M THINKING, CONTEMPLATING SOMETHING.
CLICK
CLICK
CLICK
CLICK
WOW! THAT ONE! PERFECT!
JOURNALISTS WERE BECOMING CELEBRITIES.

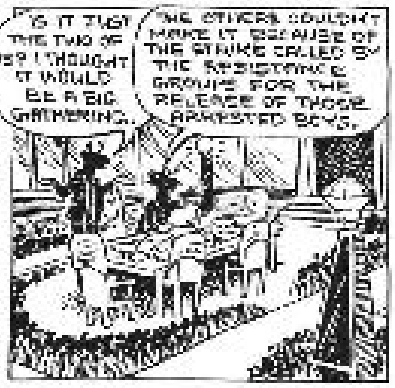
MEANWHILE, GRAPHIC PICTURES OF BULLET HOLES IN HUMAN FLESH BOOSTED THE CIRCULATION OF NEWSPAPERS.
BUT SIR, MY PHOTOS ARE BRILLIANT! YOU SHOULD SEE THE CLOSE-UP OVER! EVEN BONES AND DANGLING BLOOD VESSELS ARE VISIBLE.
I KNOW, BUT YOUNGER GUYS DESERVE A CHANCE AS WELL.
BUSINESSMEN FOUND IT WISE TO INVEST IN THE NEWSPAPER MARKET AND MANY MORE NEWSPAPERS WERE ESTABLISHED.
IT WAS A RENAISSANCE IN KASHMIR! OBSERVED THE FOREIGN MEDIA HAIR EXPERTS.
FINALLY, IT SEEMED THAT THE WORLD HAD HEARD KASHMIR CALLING.
INVITATION TO A CONVERSATION OVER DINNER.
AMBASSADORS FROM THE EUROPEAN UNION WERE CURIOUS TO KNOW WHAT THE KASHMIRI YOUTH WANTED.

I SHOULD TALK ABOUT THE INDIAN OCCUPATION FIRST.
BUT NO, THEY'LL THINK I'M JUST AN ANGRY YOUNG MAN. I SHOULD BE SUBTLE.
HOW ABOUT SAYING THAT BRITAIN LEFT US TO ROT AFTER GRANTING INDEPENDENCE TO INDIA AND PAKISTAN?
HMM, THEY MIGHT TAKE THAT PERSONALLY.
MAYBE I SHOULD START WITH THE DECAYING CULTURE AND HERITAGE IN KASHMIR.
YES, THEY'LL LOVE THAT. TALK ABOUT MUSEUMS, THEATRES AND PLAY-GROUNDS THAT HAVE BEEN TURNED INTO ARMY CAMPS.
THEN I CAN BE HOPEFUL, TALK ABOUT ENDANGERED SPECIES, ENDANGERED HUMANS, AND THEN MOVE ON TO THE RESENTMENT AGAINST THE INDIAN OCCUPATION.
BUT I MUST BE GENTLE.

AND REMEMBER, I'M REPRESENTING THE REST OF KASHMIR TO THEM.
I MUST START WITH PLEASANTRIES.
HELLO, HOW ARE YOU? NICE TO MEET YOU!
I MUST LOOK RELAXED AND SMART AND I MUST HAVE A GENUINE AND AUTHENTIC ARGUMENT.
DAMN IT, I FORGOT THE PROGRAM.
YOU SEE, GENTLEMEN, KASHMIR HAS A RICH PAST.
IT'S A MIXTURE OF BUDDHIST, BRAHMAN, SUFI AND SUFI CULTURES.
SILK ROUTE.
KASHMIR IS A PLACE OF WORLD HERITAGE – WE MUST PROTECT IT TOGETHER!
THE END OF THE KASHMIR CONFLICT WILL SAVE THIS WORLD HERITAGE SITE AND ALSO BRING PEACE TO INDIA, PAKISTAN AND THE REST OF SOUTH ASIA!

WE MUST ALSO ADDRESS THE GRIEVANCES AND ABSORPTION OF KASHMIRIS. AFTER ALL, THIS ISN'T JUST AN INDO-PAK DISPUTE... I MEAN, IF KASHMIRIS WANT TO REMAIN WITH INDIA OR PAKISTAN, LET THEM BE.
BUT IF THEY WANT INDEPENDENCE FROM BOTH OF THESE NUCLEAR-POWERED STATES, THAT'S THEIR HUMAN RIGHT AS WELL.
GENTLEMEN, THE FOOD'S DELICIOUS.

THANKS FOR LISTENING. HALF OF THE WOUNDS ARE ALREADY HEALED.


IS IT JUST THE TWO OF US? I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE A BIG GATHERING.
THE OTHERS COULDN'T MAKE IT BECAUSE OF THE STRIKE CALLED BY THE RESISTANCE GROUPS FOR THE RELEASE OF THOSE ARRESTED BOYS.

WHERE ARE THE E.U. OFFICIALS?
THEY'LL BE HERE ANY MINUTE.
I SHOULD USE THE BATHROOM THEN.

HELLO, NICE TO MEET YOU... PEACE... WORLD HERITAGE... HUMAN RIGHTS... INDEPENDENCE... SILK ROUTE...

HELLO!
WELCOME, BRIAN! I'M DANIELE SMACCA.
THIS IS MR. BRIAN. HE'S A CARTOONIST. IS THAT RIGHT?
THAT'S RIGHT.
THIS IS KENNETH THOMPSON FROM IRELAND.
THIS IS PIERRE VASSEN FROM BELGIUM.
PHILIP GROSS...
NICE TO MEET YOU ALL..
SO, WE WERE WONDERING WHAT YOU'D THINK...
MADAM, I THINK A RESOLUTION TO THE KASHMIR PROBLEM IS IMPORTANT FOR WORLD PEA--
IS IT CHINA OCCUPIED KASHMIR..
FUCK! THAT QUESTION WASN'T ON THE SYLLABUS!
WELL, I GUESS YOU'RE GIVING US A CHOICE BETWEEN DYING WITH A BULLET AND DYING WITH A BULLET. WE WANT TO LIVE!

YOU SAW HOW MANY INNOCENT KIDS WERE KILLED VERY RECENTLY. MANY OF THEM WERE UNDER 20. WE WANT HUMANITARIAN INTERVENTION FROM THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY.
OF COURSE, BUT THAT WOULD BE INTERFERING IN THE INTERNAL MATTERS OF INDIA. WE DON'T HAVE THAT AUTHORITY.

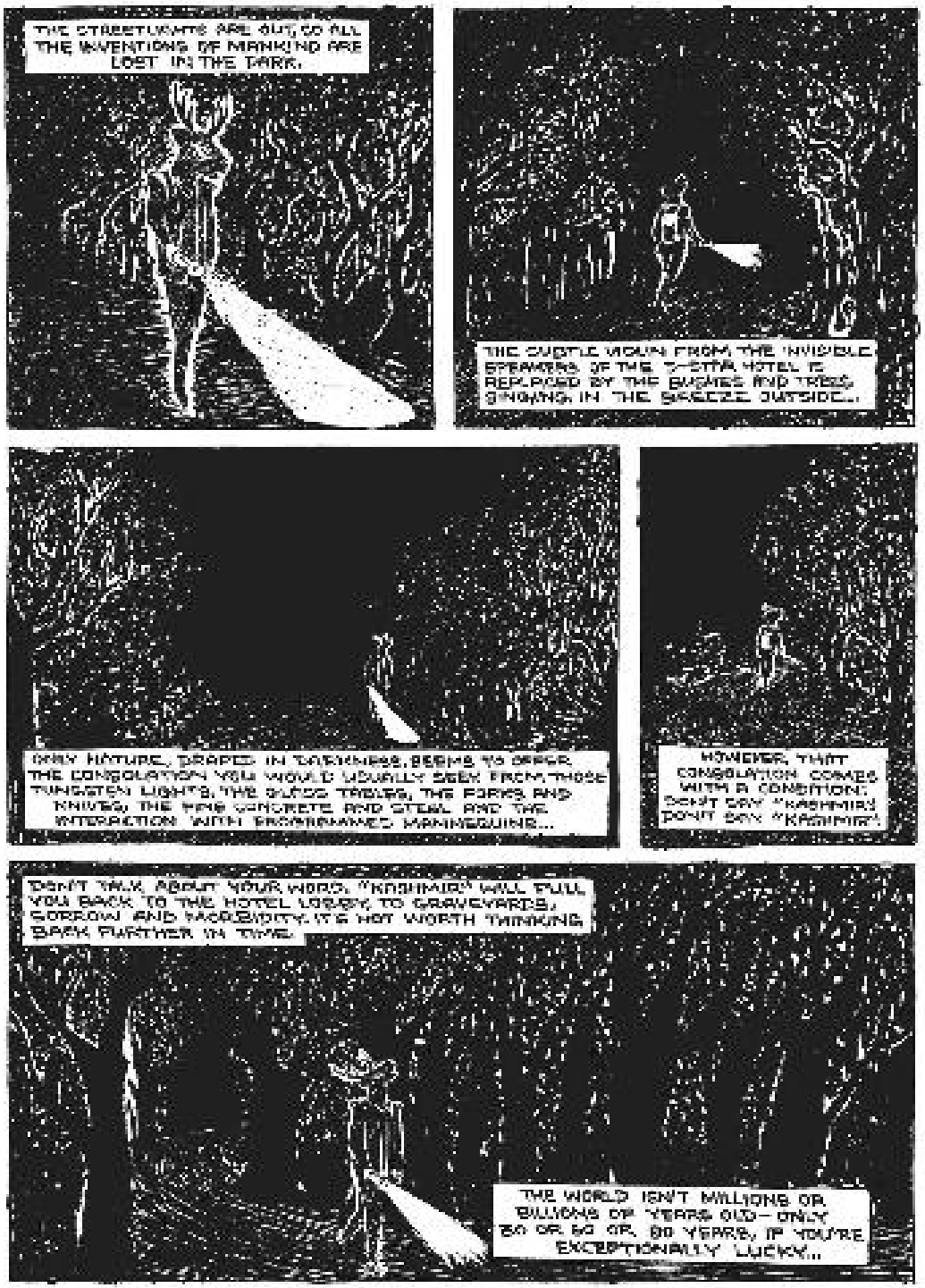
KASHMIR ISN'T INDIA, PAKISTAN OR CHINA, SIR! WE WANT INDEPENDENCE! WELCOME TO KASHMIR!

WELL, AT LEAST YOU COULD EMPOWER PEOPLE HERE. VOICE THEIR CONCERNS. WE'LL FIGHT THE BATTLE ON OUR OWN. BUT WORLD LEADERS SHOULD BE CONCERNED ABOUT THE LOSS OF INNOCENT LIVES IN KASHMIR OR ANYWHERE ELSE!

DEFINITELY. WE'LL SEE WHAT WE CAN DO.
WE MET MANY BUSINESSMEN AND LEADERS TODAY. THEY EMPHASIZED SELF-RELIANCE.
IT WAS A LONG DAY TODAY.

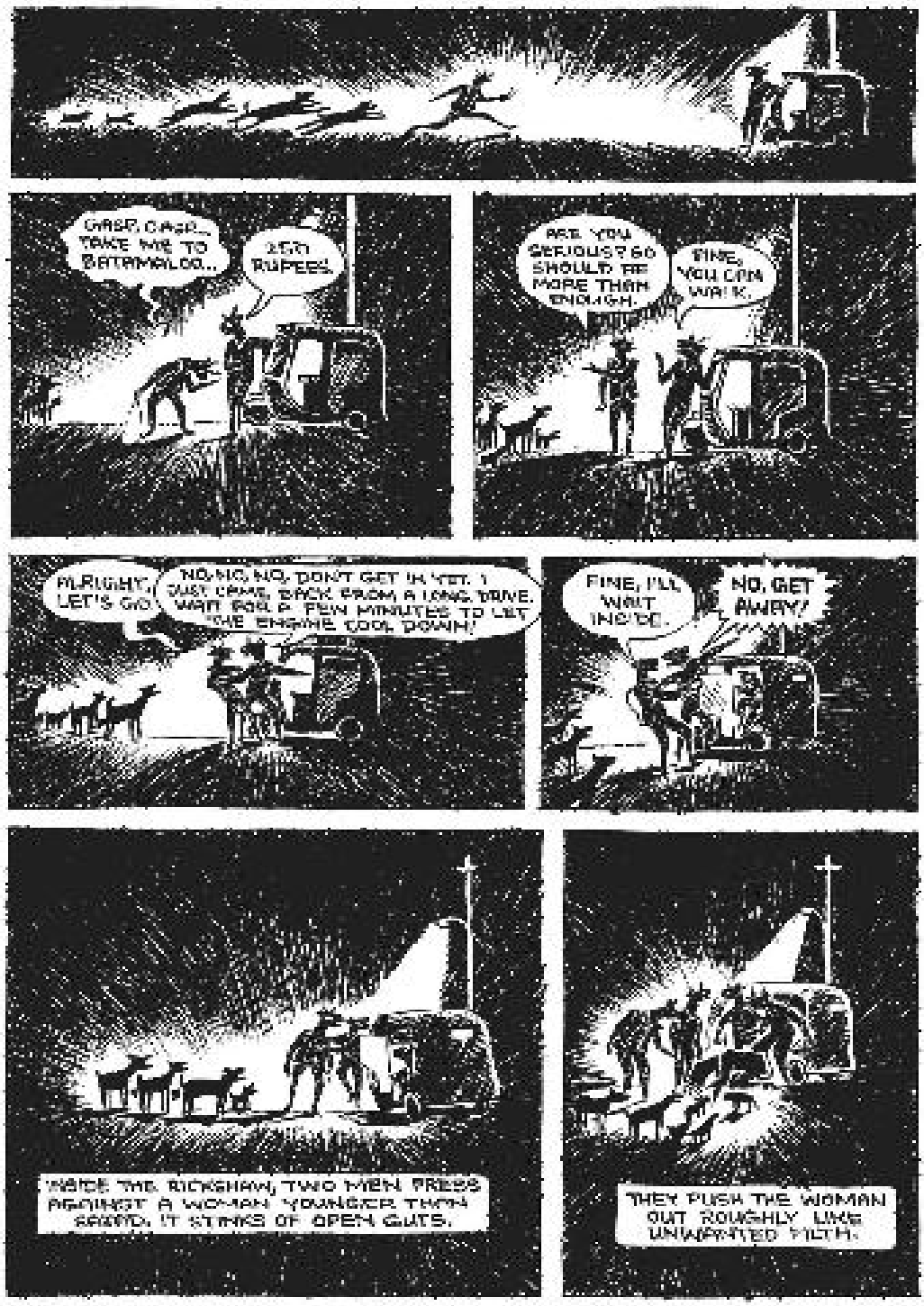
DID YOU LIKE THE FOOD?
KEEP UP YOUR CREATIVE WORK!
YEAH RIGHT, I'M A POET– THE POLICE IS AFTER ME FOR UPDATING MY BLOG!
FOOD?
WE APPRECIATE YOU COMING HERE AND SHARING YOUR THOUGHTS WITH US. THIS IS A SMALL GIFT FROM THE E.U.
HERE, ONE FOR YOU AS WELL. IT'S A SOLAR-POWERED FLASHLIGHT. PART OF THE EU'S EFFORT TO SAVE THE WORLD FROM GLOBAL WARMING.
IT WAS COLD LAST NIGHT.
MADAM, WE'LL PUT ON THE ELECTRIC BLANKETS TONIGHT.

SOLAR-POWERED
FLASHLIGHT


THE STREETLIGHTS ARE OUT, SO ALL THE INVENTIONS OF MANKIND ARE LOST IN THE DARK.
THE SUBTLE HOUN FROM THE INVISIBLE SPEAKERS OF THE 7-STAR HOTEL IS REPLACED BY THE BUGHES AND TREES SINGING IN THE BREEZE OUTSIDE...
ONLY NATURE, DRAPED IN DARKNESS, SEEMS TO OFFER THE CONSOLATION YOU WOULD USUALLY SEEK FROM THOSE TUNGSTEN LIGHTS, THE GLASS TABLES, THE FORKS AND KNIVES, THE FINE CONCRETE AND STEEL AND THE INTERACTION WITH PROGRAMMED MANNEQUINS...
HOWEVER, THAT CONSOLATION COMES WITH A CONDITION: DON'T SAY "KASHMIR! DON'T SAY "KASHMIR!"
DON'T TALK ABOUT YOUR WORD, "KASHMIR" WILL PULL YOU BACK TO THE HOTEL LOBBY, TO GRAVEYARDS, SORROW AND MORBIDITY. IT'S NOT WORTH THINKING BACK FURTHER IN TIME.
THE WORLD ISN'T MILLIONS OR BILLIONS OF YEARS OLD — ONLY 50 OR 60 OR, 80 YEARS, IF YOU'RE EXCEPTIONALLY LUCKY...

AND FORGET HISTORY. IT ONLY RATIONALIZES THE PUNISHMENT YOU'VE BEEN SENTENCED TO.
SO ENJOY THESE STEPS BRINGING YOU CLOSER TO NATURE... LOOK BEHIND YOU, IT'S DARK EVERYWHERE. YOU CAME FROM NOWHERE AND YOU'RE GOING NOWHERE...
DON'T LET YOUR CONSCIENCE SABOTAGE THIS SOOTHING MOMENT. IF IT STILL STINGS, DON'T SEEK FORGIVENESS FROM GOD, BROW, CONFESS YOUR GUILT, WRITE A STORY.
THERE WAS ONCE A KID WHO GREW UP IN WAR, WHO THOUGHT THAT THE END OF THE BATTLE WAS ONLY A FEW MONTHS AWAY.
THERE WAS ONCE A BLIND MAN WHO WAS GRATEFUL TO BE BLESSED WITH BLINDNESS.
THERE WAS ONCE MUNNU, WHO LOVED DRAWING.

MUNNU NEVER SOUGHT ANY MEANING FROM HIS SCRIBBLING, BUT AFTER GROWING INTO SATAN HE USED IT TO CRITICISE, TO EXPRESS, TO EXPIATE, TO SEEK REVENGE AGAINST TIME PASSING BY WITHOUT FULFILLING THE PROMISES.
EMBRACE THE INEVITABLE PROCESS OF RAISING, BUT PICK THE PROCESS OF GROWING UP. YOU MIGHT MANAGE A HAPPY ENDING WITHOUT HAVING TO BECOME A HERO OR A SPITEFUL MONSTER.
BARK BARK BARK BARK BARK
HELP! HELP! GOD, I'M A BELIEVER... A BELIEVER! PLEASE SAVE ME THIS ONCE!
BARK
BARK BARK


GASP, GASP... TAKE ME TO BATAMALCO...
250 RUPEES.
ARE YOU SERIOUS? 60 SHOULD BE MORE THAN ENOUGH.
FINE, YOU CAN WALK.
ALRIGHT, LET'S GO.
NO, NO, NO, DON'T GET IN YET. I JUST CAME BACK FROM A LONG DRIVE. WAIT FOR A FEW MINUTES TO LET THE ENGINE COOL DOWN!
FINE, I'LL WAIT INSIDE.
NO, GET AWAY!
INSIDE THE RICKSHAW, TWO MEN PRESS AGAINST A WOMAN YOUNGER THAN SAMMA. IT STINKS OF OPEN GUTS.
THEY PUSH THE WOMAN OUT ROUGHLY LIKE UNWANTED FILTH.

THEY'RE MY BROTHERS... I DIDN'T HAVE A FIREPOT... COLD OUTSIDE... MY BROTHERS...
HER CLOTHES ARE TORN, AND HER FACE IS COVERED WITH DUST AND WET WITH SALIVA.
AND SHE LIMPS AWAY, HUMMING SOME GIBBERISH, SHAKING WITH COLD.
BARKING DOGS FOLLOW HER, UNTIL SHE CUDDLES ONE IN HER ARMS AND THEY ALL FALL QUIET.
WHAT? WHY ARE YOU LEAVING? YOU WON'T GET ANOTHER RICKSHAW!
ALRIGHT, JUST PAY 150 RUPEES... WHY THE FUCK ARE YOU TAKING THIS PERSONALLY?
COME ON, SHE'S JUST SOME HOMELESS LUNATIC. WE WERE JUST WARMING HER UP!
FORGET HIM. WHERE DID SHE GO?

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